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A N
E S S A Y

Towards A
COMPREHENSION:
OR, A
P E R S W A S I V E
T O

U N I T Y amongst PROTESTANTS,
HUMBLY OFFERED

To the Consideration of the Two Houses of
Parliament ; and especially to the Most
Reverend the *Archbishops*, the Right Reve-
rend the *Bishops*, and the rest of the *Clergy*.

*Published with the Consent, and at the Charge, of se-
veral Ministers, and others of both Perswasions.*

By a Divine of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.

*Every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to De-
solation, and every City or House divided against it
self shall not stand, Matth. xii. 25.*

*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye
be not consumed one of another, Galat. v. 15.*

L O N D O N: Printed for FLETCHER GYLES,
over-against Grey's-Inn Gate in Holbourn; and
Sold by R. Burleigh in Amen-Corner. 1718.

[Price One Shilling.]

ESSAY

COMPREHENSION

PERSONAL

UNIVERSITY OF PROTESTANTS
HUMBER



To the Consideration of the Two Houses of
Parliament; and especially to the Most
Reverend the Archbishop, the Right Rever-
end the Bishops, and the rest of the Clergy.

Published with the Consent, and at the Charge, of se-
veral Gentlemen, and Masters of good Reputation.

By a Division of the Church of ENGLAND.

But if we look divided against itself it is divided; to De-
fection, and every City or House divided against itself is
lost. Matt. xii. 25.
But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye
be not consumed one of another. Galat. v. 15.

LONDON: Printed for HARRISON GILES,
over against St. Dunstons in the West, and
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[Price One Shilling.]

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THE PREFACE.



WHEN the following Papers were at first drawn up, they were not designed for Publick View; and that they now see the Light, is not owing to any Value the Author puts upon them, but to the Desires of some, who thought they might prove useful for the promoting Unity and Peace in the Church, and to whom, both upon the account of his Esteem for them, and the Instances of sincere Friendship he had received from them, he lay under such Obligations as not to be ca-

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pable of denying their Requests. What Entertainment they will meet with from an angry and contentious World, the Author is uncertain. They are not designed to be the Subject of Debate, but as a means to procure in some measure the Restoration of our Israel's Peace: And therefore if any shall manifest a Temper, so contrary to that recommended by our dear Redeemer, as to endeavour the keeping open the Churches bleeding Wounds, by opposing the present Undertaking, he will not think himself obliged to take notice of their uncharitable Disposition, by turning this, the Design whereof is the advancing of our Peace, into a matter of Contention. It is enough that he can approve his Sincerity to the Searcher of Hearts, that it is not any By-End, but the Publick Good, which is his only Aim in Publishing the following Papers; as also, that he has an Opportunity of manifesting to the World, that he is not of the number
of

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of those who are devoted to a Party, but does both heartily wish and pray for, the Churches Peace, and the Kingdom's Prosperity, which Two are so inseparably joined together, that whatsoever some may fancy, they are not to be parted. He does not, in the following Discourse, pretend to dictate to his Superiours: He reverences their Wisdom, and with an awful Respect to their Commands submits to their Authority. He only proposes, with a profound Humility, and great Regard to the Authority of our Rulers, what he thinks may be useful to promote our Common Peace and Prosperity; yet in this he does not presume to Direct those who sit at the Helm, either in Church or State, what is the proper Province of either as to this Matter. It is to be hoped, that All will join Hand in Hand, in the pursuit of a Design, which tends so much to the Publick Good, as an Union amongst us must certainly do. It is therefore
to

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to our Governours in general, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, that this Discourse is address'd.

The Author has been long grieved, to see the declining State of Religion and Piety; his Sorrow has been heightened, by considering what an Occasion is given by our Intestine Divisions, to the Enemies of Religion to Blaspheme; as also how much the Protestant Interest is weakened by it, and the Popish strengthened. He has long mourned to see the Churches Wounds rankle more and more, notwithstanding the healing Oyl which many excellent Persons have poured into them: He should now despair of doing any Good after so many, whose Shoes he is not worthy to untloose, have been disappointed in Attempts of this nature, did he not consider, that the Battle is not to the Strong, nor the Race to the Swift, but that

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that GOD has the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, to make use of whom he pleaseth. Should he fail in the Attempt, it is but what has happened to others before him : If he should succeed, he will count it the lasting Blessing of his Life, that GOD has made him an Instrument, if not in altogether healing, yet at least in softening the Churches Wounds. To conclude, The Cause which I do now undertake, is not the Cause of a Party, but of that Church of which our Blessed Lord is the Bridegroom, and GOD the Father ; to him therefore I commit it. If through his Mercy I succeed, to his Name be the Glory ; but if I do not, I shall always pray, that wherein I fail, another may succeed more happily. If I am mistaken in my Choice of the Expedients proposed for the promoting of Peace and Unity ; yet the Excellency of the Design, and the Sincerity of one who declares

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*declares himself a Lover of all good Men,
will atone for it, and procure him an
easy Pardon at the Hands of all Cha-
ritably Religious and Peaceable Chri-
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ESSAY

Towards an

UNION

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COMPREHENSION.



AN Union among Protestants professing the same Faith, tho' differing as to some things of less importance, would not only advance the Interest of Religion, but conduce very much to the Welfare of the Nation. This many pious Men, both out of a Zeal for Religion, and their Country, have a great while earnestly desired. There was a time; when, all Parties being in danger of being overtaken by the common Destruction, there seemed a very great disposition towards it: The Church shewed her self willing to come to some temper; and the Dissenters (if some few things, they judged sinful, might be laid aside) seemed willing to comply with the present Constitution of

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the Church for Peace sake. Had this happy Disposition in both Parties continued, or had the Iron been struck, while it had been hot, our Differences had been happily compos'd, and there had not been any necessity for this Attempt at present. But alas! no sooner were our Fears blown over by the happy Revolution, and the Accession of His Majesty to the Throne, but the Inclinations of the Contending Parties to an Union abated. It's true, that quickly after the Revolution some Attempts were made towards a Comprehension; but notwithstanding the Advantages of a Comprehension, with a limited Toleration, the Attempt was defeated, and the Design blasted, and all ended in an unlimited Toleration only. This has indeed skinn'd over the Wound, but is far from healing it. The Church now thinks her self able to preserve her Constitution, without a Comprehension; and therefore doth not concern her self to do any thing more, than what has been already done, for the Dissenters. The Dissenters are easy, and do not feel the smart of their former Prosecutions, and therefore are contented with the Liberty they now enjoy. Both Parties sit secure, as tho' there were no danger. But is all well? Is nothing more to be done for the Good of Religion, and the Interest of the Kingdom? Certainly there is; We are not so secure, as some may think us to be; and therefore it is still our Interest, to strengthen our selves against whatever Attempts may be made to ruin our Religion, and destroy our Liberties. This an Union among Protestants would be one effectual means to do: For what tends to the lessening our Breaches, to the healing our Divisions, tends also to enable us to oppose the Attempts our Enemies

mies may make either to destroy the one, or ruin the other. Let us not therefore be averse to that which will be so real a Benefit to Religion, and so great an Advantage to the Kingdom. Did our Dangers once make us inclinable to unite? Let it have the same effect upon us now; we are perhaps now in as much danger as ever. We are told from the Press, that notwithstanding all the Endeavours used to prevent the Growth of Popery amongst us, the Papists hope they shall get it established still, and boast that there is nothing in the way to the Accomplishment of their Design, but the Life of his present Majesty; And how much has their Hope been heighten'd by the irreparable Loss of the Duke of Gloucester? It is indeed to be hop'd that their Predictions will prove false, and that God who has hitherto baffled all their Attempts and Designs against us, will still be the Guardian of *England*, to preserve us from the Violence of those bloody Men; but yet their Confidence ought to make us watchful against them, by taking those prudent Methods, which may be most beneficial to us, and disadvantageous to them. As therefore the noble Attempts of the last Parliament to secure us against them, gave Life to these Thoughts; so it is to this Court, *the Honour and Safety of the English Nation*, we look for Security still, by their pursuing this Design, which owes its Life and Original to their Zeal for the Security of the Protestant Religion among us. We beseech you, *Men, Brethren and Fathers*, by all that is dear and sacred to you, either as Lovers of Religion or your Country, consider how necessary it is in this Juncture of Affairs, by all means possible, to twist, as much as may be, the differing Interests of the Kingdom

into one ; what an Advantage the effecting this Union will be to the Interest of Religion and *England* ; how much it will add to the Glory of His Majesty, to have it accomplished in his time ; how much it will be the Honour of this Parliament, thereby to heal our Breaches. Will not After-ages, when they remember your Zeal for the Protestant Religion, and the Church's Peace, rise up and call you Blessed ? When we consider these things, we cannot but hope that those will cherish this Design, who gave Life to it ; and that they will not stifle in the Birth what owes its Conception to them.

There are three things attempted in the following Papers.

1. There are some Reasons offered, to shew the Reasonableness and Necessity of attempting this Work of healing our Breaches by a Comprehension.

2. What may be fairly objected against it, is impartially considered and discussed.

3. Some Methods are proposed, which may, by the Blessing of God, be useful for the effecting this Union. But if in this Part we should seem too particular in the Proposals offered, and thereby to presume to dictate to our Superiors ; we beseech the Reader to consider, that we utterly disclaim any such thing ; we only lay down there what, by Converse with Men and Books, we find is generally excepted against by the Dissenters, and do humbly propose what we believe would be most satisfactory to them. We have indeed added the Reasons offered by the Churchmen for, and by the Dissenters against the things excepted against, that by setting things in this Light, our Superiors, whose Wisdom we admire, and to which we intirely submit, may judge the better

better of the Desires of the Dissenters, whether it be reasonable to gratify them in the things they except against, or no. There might be many Reasons urged, to shew the Reasonableness and Necessity of this Union; but we shall confine our selves to these following.

1. *Now, if ever, is the time of effecting and compassing this Union.* It was a current Opinion among some of the Ancient Philosophers, That there is a Golden and Critical Moment in every Man's Life, which if he be wise to lay hold on, may be to his Benefit and Advantage during his Abode on this side the Grave; but that if he let this slip, it might never return any more. To apply this to the Case in hand: This seems to be the critical time of effecting and bringing about this Union; we have now a King sitting at the Helm, who is disposed to concur with us in every thing that may be for our good, and whose Glory it seems to be, That he is the great Support and Defence (under God) of the Protestant Religion; and who therefore, we have reason to hope, would concur with the Kingdom, in a matter so beneficial to the Good thereof, and so necessary for the promoting and strengthening the Protestant Interest among us. To this I may also add, That as it doth appear by the Law passed the last Session against the Papists, that our Supreme Court of Legislature did then consist of worthy Men, who were concerned for the Interest of Religion; whose Concurrence therefore we had reason to expect in so good a Work as this; so we hope, that the number of these worthy Patriots will not be diminished but much increased in the approaching Parliament. We have also now in the Church a bright Constellation of Stars of the first Magnitude;

nitude, Men of Renown for God, famous in their Day for Piety, Learning and Moderation, whose Lives are the Transcript of the Word they preach, who are in eminent Stations in the Church, and so in a Capacity to forward and promote an Union. There is now Peace abroad, and therefore Leisure at home to set about it, Can we ever wish for a more favourable Conjunction of happy Circumstances for its effecting, than now there is? This is therefore the most favourable Juncture, that can be put into our Hands, for the accomplishing this great Affair. But if we let this Opportunity slip, we know not whether ever we may have another such put into our Hands. And how long this may last, we know not; the King's Breath is in his Nostrils, and when He is dead, we know not who may come after. For tho' it is to be hoped, that the present Branches of the Royal Family have seen so much of the mischief of our present and past Divisions, that they would endeavour to compose our Breaches; yet if we consider the uncertainty of Human Life, and other Circumstances, it is no way safe to delay the accomplishing this Work to another Reign: For if we slip our present Opportunities, we may hereafter repent it, when it is too late, *Post est occasio calva.*

2. *This Union will be the most effectual means to secure the Protestant Religion against the Designs of Papists and others.* The Papists have been in all Reigns contriving the Ruin of the Protestant Religion and Interest in England; and to accomplish their Designs, have been continually improving our Divisions against us. This has been the great Engine they have made use of to ruin the Protestant Religion, both in Foreign
Parts,

Parts, and here at home. To this end, they have kindled and fomented the Flames of Division continually among us. I think it might be easily manifested, that the Papists have been, at the bottom of all those Divisions, which have, and still do waste and weaken the Protestant Intèrest in these Kingdoms. By this means, what they cannot do, either by the force of Arms or dint of Argument, they are in hopes to accomplish by our own intestine Divisions. They know the Advantage of acting by that Maxim, *Divide and Rule*. They know there is nothing can undermine the Reformation, like that. Tho' they forbid their Followers to consult the Scriptures, yet in this they consult them themselves; for we find they are not unacquainted with our Saviour's Politicks, who has told us that a Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand. If therefore our Differences and Divisions among our selves are so very advantageous to the Popish Designs of ruining the Protestant Religion, and are the great Engines by which they are endeavouring to accomplish this their Hellish Contrivance; then certainly it is an Union among our selves, that alone can most effectually disappoint and baffle them. Let us make what Laws we will against them, we shall never root out that restless Generation of Men from among us, unless we unite among our selves; for so long as they can crumble us into pieces, they will be still hoping, that at last the happy Juncture will come, when, weakened by our own Dissentions, they shall totally destroy that Intèrest, which they have already divided. What can therefore be done half so effectually for the security of the Protestant Religion, as to unite us? This is what they are most afraid of; this is the thing they

are using their utmost Endeavours to prevent. This is what alone can make us formidable to the Papists, and which will blast their Hopes for ever. This is therefore what every zealous Protestant should endeavour after, and pray for the accomplishing of.

3. *This Union will be a great means of composing the Civil Differences and Factions, which do continually vex and disturb the State.* Factions in the State, have very often their Rise from Factions in Religion; and if they have not always their Rise from them, yet very often they are heightened by them. Differences in Religion make Men jealous and afraid of one another; and fear of each other naturally produces Cruelty to each other. The Church is afraid of being undermined by the Dissenters, and therefore they think it their Prudence to keep them under; the Dissenters are afraid of the Church, that they, if it were in their power, would deprive them of the Liberty they now enjoy to worship God according to the Dictates of their own Consciences, and therefore they think it their Prudence to do what they can to curb and lessen their Authority, or even quite to overthrow it. From these Counter-designs of the differing Parties, proceed very often State-Factions: For, on the one hand, the Church useth her Authority to crush those, who she believes are endeavouring to undermine her; and on the other hand, the Dissenters are using their Artifices to ward off the Blow, and secure themselves, or perhaps to return it if they have opportunity. By these Counter-actings of the two differing Factions, the State is very often embroiled and weakened. If therefore between these two Parties there could be any agreement, if there were found any common Basis in
which

which they might center, all those Broils, which are occasioned in the State by these Breaches and Divisions, would be prevented. Then the Dissenters would not be afraid of the Churchmen, nor the Churchmen of the Dissenters, for that they would be cemented into one Body; and what a mighty strengthening this would be to the State, I leave to the Judgment of any one tolerably versed in Politicks.

4. *This Union would promote that further Project of a Civil Union with Scotland.* This is a Project, which has as often miscarried hitherto, as it has been attempted. I do not pretend to determine, whether such an Union will be of Advantage to the Kingdom, or no; I love not to meddle with things beyond my Sphere, I therefore leave the determination of this to those, who understand this matter better than (I confess) I do; but in case such an Union be designed, and will be advantageous to us, there is nothing like to make the Attempt successful, so much as an Union in Religion among our selves. There are three things necessary to incorporate two People, That their King, Laws and Religion should be the same; where any of these are different, or distinct, it will prove almost impossible to incorporate two People any other way than by subduing the one to the other by Conquest. A Difference in any one of these three things will render all Treaties of Union ineffectual. Now in respect of the present State of the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*, they have the same King, and have so had for the space of almost an hundred Years; there is therefore no hindrance of this Union can arise from thence. As to the Laws of either Kingdom, what Difficulties may arise from thence to the hindrance of this Union, and the Means to obviate

viate them, I leave to the Lawyers to consider. But yet, as I suppose, the Laws of both Kingdoms are grounded upon Justice and right Reason, and therefore in respect of their Equity, and the Justice of them, are substantially the same; so I believe the Difficulties, arising from this Diversity in the Laws, may be surmounted by the strenuous Endeavours of the Learned in the Law in either Kingdom. The great Difficulty, that will therefore lie in the way of this Union, whenever attempted, will arise from the Difference of Religion in either. Tho' both Kingdoms are Protestants, and their Faith and Religion substantially the same; yet the Discipline and Modes of Worship in either Kingdom are different; and this will render all Treaties of Union very difficult, if not impossible to be effected, unless some Expedient be found out to compose and heal this mighty Difference; for Men have a greater regard to, and generally are fonder of their particular Disciplines and Rites, than their Common Faith. The only way to heal this Difference, will be by uniting (if possible) both Churches; and the way to this Union, is an Union among our selves: For if the Church of *England* opens her Arms so wide, as to embrace and receive into her Communion all those reasonable and pious Persons, who now separate from her, as scrupling some things she enjoins her Members; it may be reasonably supposed, that then the Church of *Scotland* may be brought to comply also with her Terms, seeing the Reasons why the Church of *Scotland* differs from that of *England*, are much the same with those which the Dissenters in *England* alledge against Communion with her. And if once an Union in Discipline and Worship, between the two Churches of *England* and *Scotland* were effected, it would

would be a very great step to a Civil Union and Incorporation of the two People. Tho' if such an Union should not be thought advantageous to us, or if the Attempt made for this Union in the State should fail, it would be a very great Advantage to the Church of *England*, if (for a few Alterations in her Worship and Discipline) by the Accomplishment of such an Union betwixt the two Churches, she could gain such a great Enlargement of her Borders. But if this neither should be the effect of her Condescension; yet it will be to our Everlasting Honour, that we in *England* have thus manifested our willingness, not only to give Satisfaction to our weak Brethren at Home; but also to come to such a Temper, as may be a fit Foundation for a more intimate Union betwixt the two Sister Churches, between whom the Distance at present is so wide.

5. *An Union at Home, may further and advance an Union between the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches Abroad.* Small beginnings have sometimes had very considerable Effects: And who knows, but that, if we here would but set the Example, God might bless us in *England*, with being the first Beginners of a Catholick Union among all Protestants? What an Honour this would reflect upon the Church of *England*, to be, by her own Example, the Promoter of the Universal Peace of *Israel*, I leave others to judge. But tho' this should not be the Consequence of this Union here, yet certainly the Reproach of being unable to heal her own Breaches wou'd be done away, and the Church of *England*, whose Glory is now sullied by the Defection of so many of her Members from her, would then be the Honour of Christianity, and the Glory of the Reformation: She would then shine by her own Lustre, and would re-

semble the City of God above, while that she appeared to be indeed the Pattern of Primitive Purity and Charity: She might then justly challenge to her self the Umpirage and Arbitration of the Differences Abroad. It was a cutting Reply which was once made by a foreign Divine to a Divine of our own Church, who now very worthily fills one of the Sees thereof, who, when he was pressing, with all the Topicks he could make use of to that Purpose, an Union between the Lutherans and Calvinists, as necessary on many Accounts, was took up with this sharp Reply, *That he wondered much to see a Divine of the Church of England press That so much upon him, when we, notwithstanding the Dangers we were in, could not agree our own Differences. Let the Church of England (says he farther) heal her own Breaches, and then all the rest of the Reformed Churches will with great respect admit of her Mediation to heal theirs.* What a tendency to Peace Abroad, might the beginnings of Peace here at Home have! Oh that GOD would enlighten and direct us, that we might be disposed to Peace and Union! There is nothing could reflect more Glory on our Church, than this; there is nothing can possibly raise and advance her Reputation, among the Reformed Churches Abroad, more than this.

¶ 6. *An Union among all sober and reasonable Christians, would in a great measure prevent those Soul-damning Errors of the Deists and Socinians, whereby Religion is undermined, and the Faith of the Church endangered.* It is a mournful Consideration, That in a Nation, which profess themselves to be Christians, damning Errors and Heresies, so inconsistent with Christianity, as those of the Socinians and Deists are, should grow and spread so fast among the People. It is easie to discern in what Ground these Weeds grow. That these de-

destructive Errors, so prejudicial to the Souls of Men, and dishonourable to the Protestant Religion profess'd by us, are propagated by the Papists, will appear to any who doth but consider the Nation and Stock from whence the great Patron of the *Socinian* Cause is descended. I am credibly informed, that by Nation he is *Irish*, and by Stock *Popish*. For, that his Mother was a *Papist*, I was informed by those who lived in the same Family where he conversed, though under a Disguise for a considerable time; but yet under that Disguise, he acknowledged as much to the Family, as I have asserted concerning him. By the way therefore, I think it as reasonable, that this Betrayer of the Faith of the Holy Jesus (whose Tenets are so pernicious, and whose Doctrines are thus opposite to the Faith of the Reformed Churches, whose Descent is so certainly *Popish*, if he himself be not, as many are apt to think, a *Papist* in Orders) should be made an Example of Publick Justice, as well as those who openly profess the *Romish* Faith: He deserves it more than these, in as much as a secret Foe is more dangerous than an open Enemy. Thus we see, that those who dare not directly, under a *Protestant* Government, set up for *Popery*, do by indirect Corruptions of our Faith openly endeavour to obtain their End. From whence, by the way, we may learn, That while we, by our Divisions, are eager to weaken our selves, the *Papists* are not asleep: but, laying hold of every Opportunity to ruin us. As these Opinions are propagated by the *Papists*, so we by our Animosities and Contentions with each other, give them fit Opportunities of spreading their pernicious Doctrines; to which purpose they are daily improving the Toleration of Tender Consciences against us all. And what Opportunities do we
put

put into their Hands to make the best Advantage of their Time ? For, while we should be defending the Common Faith, against the common Underminers of it, every one is engaged in the Defence of his own Tenets against those of his Brother, tho' it may be they are not worth the defending ; and in the mean time the Defence of the Common Faith lies neglected. I can compare our Case to nothing but a Town on fire, where, while every one is endeavouring (not to extinguish the Fire which burns the Town, but) to save his own House, the whole is consumed. Thus Christians, while they are every one maintaining their own unnecessary Tenets, neglect the Defence of the Common Faith, until they are all in danger of being overtaken by, and involved in the Common Destruction, brought upon us by those Underminers of it. If ever we would avoid the Mischiefs which our intestine Divisions will certainly bring upon us, if not prevented by our own Prudence ; if ever we would crush these growing Errors, and disappoint thereby the Designs of our Enemies ; we must come to an Union and Agreement among our selves. If we were once united, and the petty Differences among us laid asleep, we should better observe our Opposers, and be more at leisure to defend our Faith : Till such an Union be effected, our Religion cannot be safe, but we shall continually be exposed to the Assaults of our Enemies. I wish therefore we may see the Necessity of Uniting before our Divisions have so far weakened us, that an Union among us will be of no Advantage to us.

7. *An Union among all pious Christians, would very much facilitate the Work of Reformation among us. The debauching the Manners of Men, is another*

thor Artifice, whereby the *Papists* are endeavouring to ruin and destroy our Religion. They know, that the way to make Men of any Religion, is, first to make them of None. I make no doubt, but that much of that universal Depravation of Manners, which now we have cause to lament and bewail, and which is almost grown too mighty to be mastered by the utmost Efforts made against it, is owing to the Artifice and Contrivance of *Papists*. By this general Depravation of our Manners, the *Papists* have a twofold Advantage over our Religion; hereby they have Matter afforded for the reproaching the Protestant Religion, as a Sink of Uncleaness, and all manner of Immorality; hereby also Men are disposed to entertain *Popery*, whenever it shall obtain the Ascendency among us: For when Men are once unhinged from every Religion, they are qualified for the embracing that Religion which shall be uppermost. To disappoint and defeat therefore the Enemies of our Religion, in their hopes arising from either of these Advantages, it is absolutely necessary that the Practice of Religion should be encouraged among us. There are indeed great Attempts made to effect this difficult and almost insurmountable Work; and God has blessed the Endeavours that have been used to bring it to some Perfection, wonderfully: This is (as a worthy Divine lately observed) the only thing almost that looks with a prosperous Aspect upon us. But tho' there are many Endeavours used with Success to bring about this Reformation among us; yet the one Thing needful is still wanting, *viz. An Union among serious Christians*. So long as there are Contentions among good Men about Trifles, there will be those, who, because there are Differences in Religion, will believe there is, no

no Religion ; who therefore will live as they list. I confess it is no good Argument, that because there are Differences in Religion, therefore there is no Religion : This is as tho', because, as to all the particular Circumstances of the Nature of any one thing in the World, no two Men perhaps in the World are universally agreed, that therefore there is nothing at all in the World. It should rather be an Argument, That because there are so many Disputes about it, there must be therefore some such thing as Religion : *Ignoti nulla cupido*. But yet tho' this Argument is not consequential and good, yet it is an Argument that by Experience is found to be very powerful in swaying the corrupt Minds of Men. If therefore we would take off the Prejudices of Men against Religion, we must lay aside our Heats, and compose our Differences : Unity is the only way to reform us effectually, and with success. Did good Men but consider how many bad Men their Differences make, they would be careful how they rend the seamless Coat of Christ lightly. So mischievous are Differences, that small Truths should not divide us easily. If we understand it of Truths not necessary, that was a noble Saying of Erasmus, *Adeo invisæ sunt mihi discordiæ, ut veritas etiam contentiosa displiceat*. I hate Discord so much, that Truth it self displeases me when it is a matter of Contention.

8. It is the Interest of all Parties, that an Union should, upon reasonable Terms, be made between the Church men and the sober Dissenters. I have often admired, that what is so much every body's Interest, has been so much, and by so many, opposed. I know no Person, but the Papist, whose Interest it is not to promote, but oppose this Union. That therefore it has been hitherto prevented, is not because it inferences with the Interest of any Party

Party of Protestants ; but because it interferes with the Popish Interest : These are the Men, who by their Artifice and Cunning have hitherto with too great Success divided us. Had we but known, either what is the Interest of Religion, or what is our own Interest, we should not have so long continued to maintain and keep up our Differences, but should have composed them long e'er this. To illustrate this Reason more fully to the Capacity of every Man, I shall evidence it to be the special Interest, not only of the Church in general, but of the Nobility and Gentry in particular ; as also of the Dissenters, to join their Endeavours jointly to promote and bring about this Union.

1. It is the great Interest of the *Church-men*, that this Union should be effected. By this Addition of her now separated Brethren, her Beauty and Strength would be much increased. It is with the Church as with a piece of Architecture, the larger the Foundations are laid, the more magnificent and strong the Superstructure is like to be. There is nothing can render the Church more formidable to her Enemies, or safe against their Attempts, than an Union among all sober Protestants ; by this means her Divisions, which give such a great Advantage to her Enemies, will be healed, and her Borders enlarged, by the Addition of a Society of Men who are zealous for the Protestant Faith and (if the Church were but better acquainted with them) would be found to be capable of defending her against all those Errors with which she is on every side attack'd, and who would therefore join heartily in her Defence against the Oppositions of Papists and others. I am satisfied, that if both sides were but better acquainted, or did but know each other better, there would not be that Aversion to Unity which has hitherto appeared too much on both sides. It is Prejudice,

and Ignorance of each others Dispositions, doth on both sides keep open the Breach, to the great disadvantage of the Church, and weakening the Protestant Interest.

2. As it is the great Interest of the Church in general, so in a special manner is it the Interest of *the Nobility and Gentry*, that this Union should be effected. In the Safety and Preservation of the Protestant Religion doth consist that Security which These have for a great part of their Estates; which they must certainly part with, if ever Popery should get the upper hand among us. It was esteem'd a great piece of Policy in *Henry VIII*, to divide the Church-Lands among the Nobility and Gentry: This indeed I never look'd on as an effect of the Policy of that Prince, but rather of his lavish and profuse Temper; but whether it were from the one or the other, I confess that, under God, it has been the great Security of the Protestant Interest among us. Now it is the Interest even of those who have no regard either to the Good of the Church, or the Salvation of their Souls, out of a Regard to their Estates, to defend and maintain the Protestant Religion; because if that is overturned among us, they must part with a very considerable part of their Estates to the former Proprietors of them. We all know the Temper and Disposition of the Church of *Rome* too well, to believe that if once they recover our Churches, they will patiently permit us to enjoy those Lands, without disturbance, which did once belong to their Churches, and of which, in Right of them, they were then the Possessors. And if a Restitution of these must be made by the present Owners, what an Eclipse this will be to that Grandeur and Plenty which our Gentry are the Possessors of, I leave to those to judge, who consider that before the Reformation one Third Part of the Profits

Profits of her Lands did belong to the Church. If therefore these would effectually secure their Estates, they must secure the Protestant Religion; for the Interest of the one, and of the other, are inseparably joined. And if ever they would secure the Protestant Religion from the Attempts of Papists, and thereby secure their Estates, they must unite the Professors of it. For, in the Union of these doth consist the Strength of the Protestant Interest in England, and by consequence the security of the Riches and Grandeur of our Gentry. In a word, it is so far the Interest of These that this Union should be accomplished, that until this be effected, neither our Religion, nor their Estates, can be secure from the restless Endeavours of the Papists.

3. It is in a special manner the Interest of the Dissenters, that there should be an Union effected between the Church-men and Them. Now, at most, they are but tolerated, they live at best but precariously, upon the uncertain Bounty of their Benefactors; and therefore are necessarily obliged to be subject to the peevish Humours of every fretful Person, who has either a Power or Will to raise Parties or Factions amongst them. But if this Union were effected, they would then become a Part of the present Establishment; they would have a certain and legal Maintenance; they would not then have such a Dependance upon the People for it; and therefore would be capable of a freer Exercise of their Ministry than now they are; they need not then be afraid of displeasing every captious Temper, but might with a greater freedom reprove the Immorality of their Auditors than now they can.

9. This Union is feasible, and easy to be effected. There is nothing wanting but a peaceable Disposition in the several Parties concerned, to effect

and accomplish it. What is it that divides us? It is no fundamental Article of Faith, or necessary Duty of Religion; we have all the same God, the same Saviour, the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same Bible; we disagree about nothing that is necessary to Religion: All the Difference which has so long divided us, is only about some Modes of Discipline and Worship, which are not by either Side esteemed necessary either to the Being or Well-ordering of the Worship of God; about some little Things, which by one Side are accounted indifferent, by the other Side unlawful, or at least inexpedient. What a little matter therefore is required to unite and heal all our Breaches? Only the Alteration of a few unnecessary Things, which the one Side cannot (as they pretend) comply with for fear of offending God, as judging them unlawful; whereas the other side look upon them as things indifferent, which they may retain or abolish at their Pleasure, without any Offence against God, which therefore they may upon this occasion part with without offering any Violence or Wrong to their Consciences. And if ever these things, which are alterable in their Nature, and disputable as to their Lawfulness, are according to their Nature to be altered, it is now, when the Common Cause of Religion, and the Union of the Church, doth so much call for it.

Thus have I given several Reasons, why an Union among all sober and reasonable Protestants is absolutely necessary for the Good of the Church, and Interest of Religion. I proceed now, according to the Method I proposed, to consider what is, or may, with any pretence of Reason, be alledged by any against it. This I shall the more willingly do, that by this means a matter of so great Concernment for the Benefit and Advantage of Religion, may be set in its true and proper Light.

Light. In performing this part of the Work, I shall (laying aside all Prejudice and Partiality, the great Enemies to naked Truth) propose what is or may be objected against the Necessity of this Union, in its full Force and Strength.

Object. 1. It may perhaps be pleaded by some, that it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to court such factious Separatists as the Dissenters are to an Union with her; That it is the Duty of her stubborn and rebellious Sons to return to their Obedience, by complying with the innocent and laudable Customs of their Holy Mother; That for the Church to forego her Rites and Ceremonies to please a few factious Persons, who will never be quiet, but are like the troubled Seas, which continually are casting up Mire and Filth, is to expose her Authority to Contempt, and to make her vile and despicable; That the only way to maintain the Honour and Grandeur of the Church, is to maintain her Authority over her Members, and to defend her Rites against all Opposers.

Reply. There are several Things contained in this Objection fit to be considered: As, That it is the Duty of Christians to submit to the innocent and commendable Customs of that Church of which they are Members; and, That it is necessary that the Authority of the Church should be maintained: That at least one way to maintain that, is to defend her Rites and Ceremonies against Opposers: That the Dissenters are factious, and but few; and, That it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to court them to an Union with her. These, I think, are all those Things which are of any Weight or Moment in the Objection: All which therefore I shall in their order consider.

I grant that it is the great Duty of every Christian, in his Place, to preserve the Peace of that Church of which he is a Member, by a Submission to the innocent and laudable Customs thereof. No Man ought needlessly to violate the Churches Peace by a causeless Separation from her, upon the Account of the Rites of that Church whereof he is a Member. Tho' I cannot allow a causeless Separation, as such, to be, in the proper and strict Signification of the Word, a *Schism*; yet, I cannot but look upon it as a Sin of a more Scarlet dye than that of *Schism* is, because the Evil thereof is more heinous, and of a greater extent. He that doth, without a just Ground for it, rend the seamless Coat of Christ, sinneth greatly against God. A Man ought to be very well satisfied that the Grounds upon which he doth it are justifiable, before he withdraws himself from the Communion of a Church. Some indifferent Rites are no justifiable Grounds of a Separation. Every Church has its Rites, which are innocent in themselves, and necessary for the Order and Well-management of the Church; with these her Members ought to comply, and not either from Faction, or Interest, for the sake of these to divide the Church: This all reasonable Men must necessarily be convinced of. The great Question between the Church-men and the Dissenters, such of them I mean, who are reasonable Men, is not, Whether the Church has not Authority to impose Rites, or, Whether it is not the Duty of her Members to comply with them, so be it they be innocent and harmless; this, as it is maintained by the one Party, so it is granted by all sober and reasonable Men on the other Side: But the Question turns here, Whether those Rites the Church enjoins are innocent, and not, on the contrary, sinful? The Church pleads for the former; the Dissenters assert the lat-

ter and therefore plead, that they cannot comply with them for fear of offending God. I will not pretend to determine this, either on the one Side or the other. There are some, that think it would put a final Issue to this Matter, if the Distinction of Rites and Ceremonies into simple and mixt, were but allowed and seriously considered by those who disagree about the Rites in Dispute. Simple Rites and Ceremonies, are only a Determination of those General Circumstances of Worship, which are in general proposed in the Scripture, but are left to the particular Determination of the several Churches, as their several Circumstances do require. Such Rites and Ceremonies as these, the Church has an Authority to decree, ordain, determine, and enjoin; and in these it is a Christian's Duty to submit. Mixt Rites and Ceremonies are such, which either are not, or cannot be, enjoined or observed, without the Injunction or Observation of something new, added to the Matter of Divine Worship. These Ceremonies or Rites, the Dissenters say, and the Church allows it, that she has no Right to enjoin, neither is it the Duty of her Members to practise them; but, on the contrary, to oppose them, as Innovations in the Worship of G O D.

2. I grant that it is necessary, for the Honour of Religion, and the Safety of the Church, that her Authority should be maintained and supported. The only Way to preserve Peace and Order in the Church, is to keep up a due Government in her, according to the Canons, either expressly laid down in the Scripture, or which are, according to the Power which God has granted to the Church, established by her for this purpose; provided there be always a special Regard had to the Limitation of this Power in Scripture. For tho' the Dissenters deny the Churches Power to Decree or Ordain

dain mixt Ceremonies ; yet all sober Men must grant, That the Church hath a Power of decreeing simple and naked Rites ; in which Sense I am apt to think that most Dissenters would readily Subscribe the 20th Article of the Church of *England*. If this be not granted, it is impossible that there should be any Government or Order in the Church, but the whole must necessarily be a heap of Confusion : For, what Order can there be in a Church, who has no Authority, or whose Authority is not maintained and supported ? The great Doubt of many sober Dissenters is not, whether the Churches Authority is to be maintained, this is by all sober Men granted ; but whether the Church doth not go beyond her Authority, in ordaining and enjoining the Observation of those Things which they in their Consciences believe to be unlawful ; and, whether this supposed Extent of her Authority beyond its Bounds, be not an Act of Tyranny over the Consciences of Men ; whether therefore, tho' Men are bound for Conscience-sake to submit to the Churches lawful Authority, they are for the same reason bound and obliged to submit to her in the Things in dispute.

3. I do deny, That the way to maintain the Churches Authority, is to defend her Rites and Ceremonies against all Opposers. This is indeed the way which some high Ceremonialists have taken to maintain it ; but with what Success, the Effects shew us. The most effectual way to maintain the Churches Authority, is to defend her Faith, from all the Corruptions with which deluded and obstinate Hereticks are every Day endeavouring to undermine and ruin it ; as also, to be careful that her Members, especially her Ministers, do recommend this Faith by their own holy Life and Example to others. It has been a very great Mistake

stake which the Church, prompted thereunto
 by her secret, but implacable Enemies, has al-
 most ever since the Reformation made, in exert-
 ing the edge of her Power and Authority (which
 ought to have been levelled chiefly against those,
 who have either innovated in her Faith, or apo-
 statiz'd from the strict Rules of Holiness) against
 those who have only scrupled some Rites which
 the Church her self looks upon to be but indis-
 ferent, and therefore, without any Detriment to
 the Faith, or Practice of Religion, may be let
 alone. This Mistake about the proper Objects
 for the exercise of her Power, has very much
 impaired and lessened the Churches Authority.
 The Primitive Church took another course to
 maintain it, which proved much more succe-
 ssful, notwithstanding all the Difficulties she then
 laboured under by the violent Oppressions of
 her Enemies. The Church was not then fond of
 pompous Ceremonies; the Worship of God was
 then (as an excellent Prelate observes) pure and
 spiritual, simple, and free from Cost and Pomp,
 from Theatrical Shews as well as idolatrous
 Rites: And as they were not fond of these things,
 so neither did they exert their Authority in
 the defence of them; they turned the edge of
 their Authority another way, and employed their
 spiritual Power to preserve the Churches Faith
 from Error, and the Practice of her Members
 from Scandal. They did not censure Persons
 who were sound in the Faith, and exclude them
 who were unblameable in their Lives from
 Communion with them, only because they could
 not comply with every indifferent Rite which
 they look'd upon as decent: Their Censures were
 pronounced against the Corrupters of their
 Faith; their Excommunications were denounc'd
 against the unjustifiable and obstinate Impieties

of their Members. While this Temper lasted among them, they flourished in the Unity of the Faith, and the pure and holy Simplicity of their Worship, was attended with the daily addition of new Converts to Christianity : The Holiness of their Lives recommended their Doctrines to all about them ; so that the Church was daily enlarged in her Borders. As this Spirit in the Professors of Christianity declined, and a Value and Esteem for a pompous and theatrical Worship encreased ; so the Glory of *Israel* did gradually decline, and the Substance of Christianity by degrees dwindled into a mere Shadow : Holiness, the great Evidence of the Effects of the Churches Authority, decreased, and Pomp and Grandeur the great Opposites to Primitive Purity and Simplicity, encreased daily. By this means indeed, vain Minds were gratified, but spiritual Minds were greatly offended. A theatrical Worship, abounding with pompous Ceremonies, may please and tickle vain Fancies ; but it is Simplicity and Purity that doth affect and charm the Heart of a serious Person : This adds a Lustre to Religion, far beyond all the Pomp with which Superstition can possibly vamp it : This strikes her Members with an awe and fear of her Authority, which influences Men's Lives more than the Wonder that is raised in them for a time, by a View of her outward Grandeur, can do. This may be laid down as a Rule, that the less Ceremony and Pomp, and the more Simplicity and Purity there is in the Worship of any Church, the greater is her Authority over her Members : There is in Simplicity and Purity Charms, which do by an unseen, but irresistible Force, attract and draw Men to Obedience.

4. Another Thing fit to be considered in this Plea, is what is said in respect to the Tempers of the Dissenters. In this Plea, they are represented as a factious and restless Generation of Men, who ever were, and always will be, troublesome to the Church. In answer to this, as I do not vindicate the Dissenters, so neither can I excuse the Church-men. I think there are too many factious and restless Men among all Parties; and this is the Reason why (to the great Advantage of Popery and Irreligion) our Breaches have been kept open so long, notwithstanding the hearty Endeavours of some to unite and heal them. I am satisfied that many Dissenters have been very faulty, and have factiously endeavoured to keep open our Breaches, either from Interest, or a Spirit of Opposition; and this they have been too successful in, by still starting new Difficulties, and daily raising new Objections against the Terms of Communion proposed by the Church of *England*. But tho' there are some such factious Persons among them, yet it doth not follow that they are all such. I know many of them, who are blessed, not only with a Spirit of Piety, but Moderation also; whose earnest Desire it is, that some Expedients might by the Providence of God be found out to heal our Breaches. But as I will not excuse the Dissenters, so neither can I vindicate the Churchmen: I cannot but think, that they have been highly to blame in this Matter; many of these have contributed much to our Divisions, by a too stiff Adherency to the Ceremonial Part of our Worship, if not by an addition to it. A rigid Stiffness and Bigottry on either Side is not commendable. If our Breaches are ever healed, it must be by yielding somewhat on both Sides. That an Union should

be effected, it is necessary, that on the one hand the Church should part with, or at least leave them in their Use as they are in their Nature, those Things which are indifferent to themselves, and obnoxious to the Dissenters. It is also necessary, on the other hand, that the Dissenters should not seek after Objections against the Terms proposed, but should take Things which are capable of a double Sense or Design in the best of the Two, and that they should comply with what they look upon as indifferent, but the Church as necessary to preserve her Order and Discipline. I do indeed think, that the Dissenters have, by their Jealousies, and taking Things in the worst Sense, created to themselves many Difficulties. I shall only observe this, that as two parallel Lines will never meet unless they incline a little to each other; so two contrary Opinions, stiffly maintain'd, will never coalesce, unless either Party yield somewhat.

§. Another thing fit to be considered in this Objection, is the Numbers of those who separate themselves from the Communion of the Church of *England*. I confess, that their Factions among themselves, being divided into so many Parties, without being united into one Body, doth render them the Contempt, and not the Fear, of the Church. But yet if we consider the Numbers of those who do withdraw themselves from the Communion of the Church of *England*, we must own that the Breach is very great: And tho' they are not able themselves to endanger the present Establishment, yet it must be confessed that so great a Separation doth not only sully and cloud her Glory very much, but weakens her Strength, whereby she is, and will be, in a time of Danger, less able to maintain her self against the common Enemies of our Religion, the

the Papists. Further, If we consider the Growth and Increase of those two dangerous Factions, of the Anabaptists and Quakers; the one of which, by putting every ordinary Fellow in the Pulpit, is subverting the very Order of the Ministry; and the other of which do, by their profess'd Doctrines, aim at the Destruction of all Magistracy, and are endeavouring to reduce all into a State of Anarchy and Confusion: I say, if we consider the Numbers of either of these two Parties, as also what Numbers of Deists and Atheists, who are Dissenters from all Religion, are made by our Divisions; the Church will see abundant Reason to part with a little to those who differ but a little from them, that so the whole may be preserved from the growing Power of these dangerous Enemies, who even upon the account of their Numbers are not to be despised.

6. The last Thing worthy of Consideration in the Objection before mentioned, is this; The Plea, that it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to court the Dissenters to an Union with her. This Plea indeed might become the Mouth of a Member of the Romish Church, whose intolerable Pride is notoriously known to the World; but certainly it doth not become the Mouth of any of the Members of that Church who owns her self Protestant. And yet, if we may judge by the Actions of some Persons, they have by those declared, that it is their fixed Judgment, that it is beneath the Church to condescend so far, as to invite those who dissent from her to an Union with her. Certainly those Persons who can think thus, have forgot, or at least do not consider, that Humility and Condescension is the greatest Honour of that Church who professes her self to be
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the Spouse of Him who himself was a Pattern of Humility and Condescension. If it were not beneath the Primitive Church, for the healing of that great Breach between the Jewish and Gentile Christians which did then divide the Church, to submit to so great an Alteration in her Government, as to admit of (for a time at least) two Bishops in the same City, which they did, if we may believe the Reverend Dr. *Hammond*, and other Great Men of the *English Church*; then it cannot be beneath the Honour of the *English Church* to invite the sober Dissenters, who do not require any substantial Alterations in her Government or Discipline, but only the laying aside some Declarations and Subscriptions, which are as Clogs to their Consciences, and the abolishing a few indifferent Rites, to Communion with her. • If it were not beneath the Great Apostle *St. Paul* to part with several Privileges and Immunities, which were personal, and to become all things to all Men, that he might by any means win some; then certainly it is not beneath the Church of *England* to part with some little things for the sake of Union, that thereby those Numbers of Dissenters, which by her Condescension in all probability may be won over to the Church, might be gained to her Communion, whereby her Borders would be greatly enlarged. Lastly, If it were not beneath our Saviour, whose Spouse the Church of *England* professes to be, and whom we are commanded to imitate and follow, tho' he were the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father, to condescend so far, and to stoop so low, as not only to court and invite the meanest Sinner to accept of that Salvation which is offered in the Gospel, and this with the most earnest Entreaties, but also to die for obstinate and rebellious Sinners; then cer-

certainly it cannot be beneath the Church, to condescend so far as to invite the Dissenters to an Union with her, tho' it be at the Expence of some of her Rites and Ceremonies. These are Examples which should incline Persons of every Party to Humility and Condescension, and to make as large Steps as possibly they can towards an Union amongst us. Thus have I impartially considered what is worthy of Consideration in this Objection. I shall therefore proceed unto the next.

Objeſt. 2. It may perhaps be objected by some against an Union, That if the Church should, for the sake of an Union with the Dissenters, part with some of her Rites and Ceremonies, which are indifferent to her ; That this would not heal the Breach, but encourage factious Persons, by finding daily fault with her Discipline and Worship, to seek Pretences to withdraw themselves from her Communion, unless the Church would also come to their Terms, how unreasonable soever they were. That this Compliance of the Church may therefore, when Factions are so very common among us, endanger the total Loss of her Ecclesiastical Discipline ; in as much as from the Churches Compliance, with the modest Request of some, others also would be emboldened to hope for her Compliance with their unreasonable Demands, though inconsistent with the Peace and Order of her Government and Worship. That therefore it is safest for the Church, without abating any thing, to maintain her Ground against all her Rebellious Children.

Reply. There are also in this Objection some Things worthy of Consideration, such as are these : That Factions are now very rife ; That any Compliance on the Churches Part would
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encourage them ; and, That this might have an ill Influence upon the Ecclesiastical Government and Discipline. If any one of these Things, except the Rifeness of Factions, could be undeniably proved, I should be very far from pressing the Church to the least Condescension to those who differ from her : I would neither encourage Faction, nor yet by any means would I endanger the Churches Discipline and Order. The Design of pressing this Matter so earnestly, not only upon the Church, but every reasonable and pious Person, is to suppress Factions, and prevent the Divisions arising from them ; as also to prevent the utter Ruin and Loss of that Discipline and Order, which is, (by the Power of Factions, and the Multitude of Divisions in the Church) in danger of being totally abolished and rooted out.

1. I grant, that Factions are now very rife, and therefore we should be very careful how we do any thing to encourage or strengthen them. One would think, that the Common Danger we are all in, from Popery on the one hand, and from Atheism and Profaneness on the other hand, should stifle and suppress all our factious Differences, and that the Danger we are in, should induce us to unite for the Defence of our Common Faith. But notwithstanding our Dangers be so great and imminent, that (however secure we may look upon our selves to be) I verily believe it never was greater, and tho' if we would but unite for the Common Defence of the Faith, perhaps we never had the like Opportunity put into our Hands to secure it against all Attempts for the future ; yet neither considering our Danger on the one hand, nor our Advantages on the other, instead of coming to any Union among our selves, we daily grow more factious than other, and our Breaches are every day

made wider by the crafty Industry of our Enemies, who know how to improve our turbulent Spirits to our own Disadvantage. I cannot excuse many of the Dissenters ; for I verily believe, Faction more than Conscience has influenced many of them, whose Design it has always been to ruin, and overthrow all Order and Discipline in the Church, that so they may introduce Anarchy and Confusion, as most delightful and advantageous to those whose Delight it is to fish in troubled Waters. But yet the Faults of a few are not to be cast upon a whole Party, unless especially the Church of *England* can altogether justify every Member of her Communion from all Suspicion of Guilt in this respect. I am satisfied, if there had not been too much of Faction on both Sides, our Breaches had not been so wide ; or if Faction did but cease in both, our Divisions would quickly be at an happy End. As it is factious to divide the Church for the sake of those Things we can, but will not do ; so it is no less factious, to be stiff and unmoveable in the maintaining of those Things we can, but will not part with. This is the Temper of many on both Sides. But there are many, yea very many on both Sides, who are of another, and more heavenly Mind. There are many Dissenters, who, to my Knowledge, do separate themselves from the Communion of the Church of *England*, not from Faction, but Conscience ; and who would do any thing, but sin against GOD, for the sake of an Union betwixt us. There are many Churchmen who earnestly desire this Union ; and if it were in their Power, would freely part with those little Things which divide us. But it is our Misery, that this is not the Temper of all on either Side. But that Faction is so strong, this indeed should

make us very careful, that we do not encourage or strengthen it.

2. It's urged in this Plea against an Union, That any Condescension on the Churches Part, will but encourage factious Persons, and embolden them in their Attempts against the Churches Peace. I confess, there is a Generation of Men in the World, who are, by the Clemency and Condescension of their Superiors, rendered more bold in their Offences against them : These, as they are exorbitantly wicked, so their Disingenuity, which is equal to their Wickedness, renders them undeserving of their Superior's Clemency. I will not deny, but as there are such disingenuous Persons in respect of the Civil Actions of Mankind ; so it is possible that there may be Persons as disingenuous and wicked as to Spirituals, who it may be will be emboldened by her Clemency to despise and trample upon the Churches Authority : These, as they are the worst of Men, so they do not deserve any Interest or Share in the Churches Clemency : neither can I think that they will have any Reason to expect it. It is not an Union with these unreasonable Men that I am pleading for ; but with those only, who plead for nothing, but either an Abolition, or at least an Indifferency, as to the Use of those Things which the Church looks upon as indifferent, and the Dissenters as sinful ; that so they may not be obliged to act contrary to the Dictates of their own Consciences, in complying with those Things which they have so great an Aversion to, and for which the Church her self has no greater a Veneration. Neither can I ever be induced to believe, that a complying with the easie and reasonable Request of these Men, can be prejudicial in the least to the Interest of the Church,

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or that it will encourage factious Persons in their Attempts against her Peace, in hopes that because she answers the reasonable Request of that therefore they also may, by a factious Separation from her, make their own Terms with her. They may rather expect, That after the Church has manifested so much Clemency and Condescension, as to part with what is indifferent to her, for the sake of an Union with her Dissenting Brethren ; and after she has opened her Arms so wide to receive her returning Sons, that she will then make those ungrateful Persons, who can thus offend, against not only her Discipline and Order, but her Clemency and Condescension also, the Examples of her Indignation, by inflicting the sharpest Censures upon them.

3. It is insinuated in this Objection, as tho' the least Condescension on the Churches part, would have an ill Influence upon her Discipline. This can be by no other way, than by the Encouragement of Factions, which may embroil and disturb her Discipline, by disputing her Authority. If therefore it be evident, that this Condescension and Clemency of the Church will not strengthen or encourage Factions, but on the contrary will weaken and discourage them ; then the Force and Strength of this Plea will quickly vanish into Smoak. The Dissenters wish, that in some small Matters her Discipline might be corrected ; but no reasonable or good Man can wish, or desire, that the Order and Discipline of the Church should be abolished, or that Anarchy should take place therein. Ecclesiastical Discipline is as necessary to be preserved and maintained in the Church, as the Civil Discipline in the State. It is not a total Abolition, but a due Limitation of her

Authority, according to the Canon of the Scripture, to which they do not now look upon it altogether conformable, which the sober and modest Dissenters do earnestly desire.

Object. 3. It may perhaps be pleaded by some against the Alteration of any thing for the sake of an Union, That it may be of ill consequence to the Church, to alter any thing in her Discipline and Worship. That as Innovations in the State, so also Innovations in the Church, are very dangerous. That if once the Humour of Innovating in Religion gets Footing among us, we know not where, nor when, it will end. That when the ancient Land-marks are removed, we know not where, nor when, they will be fixed again for the future. It may perhaps be farther urged, That in the Memory of our Fathers we have seen too dismal Effects of the Innovations in Religion, ever to attempt any thing of this nature for the future. That to this innovating Humour were all those Confusions and Distractions, both in Church and State, in the time of *Oliver's* Usurpation, owing. That therefore it is best to keep things as they are.

Reply. I confess, Innovations are dangerous, and have produced sad Effects in the Church; of which, the Instance alledged is a deplorable Example. Tho' it must be acknowledged, That some great things were done at that time; yet, as I cannot justify the Right of that Government, so neither can I vindicate all that was then done; great Enormities, both in Civil and Religious Affairs, were then committed. I also acknowledge, that the removing old Land-marks before we are come to a full Resolution where to fix them for the future, is very dangerous; and therefore to prevent any ill Effects

Effects which may attend the Alteration of any thing in our Discipline or Worship, it is necessary, that if ever any thing should be done of this nature, that in the doing thereof these following Rules and Limitations should be observed.

1. It is necessary, that these Alterations should be made by Authority. Innovations are dangerous where they are made in a Heat, and without the Guide and Direction of Publick Authority. These indeed have produced sad Effects in the Church. Men are naturally addicted to that which is new ; and when once they are beginning to alter, unless the Prudence of those in Authority doth steadily guide and direct them, we know not where, nor when, they will end. We see, that those who have begun only with the Discipline of the Church, have not ended without an Apostacy, and falling off from the Faith and Doctrines of the Church. The first Foundations and Grounds of those damnable Opinions (which so many have imbibed, and in the Defence of which so many have incorporated themselves into distinct Societies, thereby to carry on their Designs the better against the Church) were at first laid in some particular Exceptions against the Discipline and Ceremonies of it. But tho' this has already been, and will again be, the Effects of Innovations in Religion made without Authority ; tho' Popular Alterations in the Discipline and Government of the Church, made by the giddy Multitude, who have had no other Guide than an ignorant Zeal to proceed by, have proved so scandalous to Religion, and destructive to the Peace of the Church ; yet we have no reason to fear some Alteration in the Ritual Parts of Religion, made by the lawful Authority

ty of the Kingdom, no more than we have reason to be afraid of the Repeal of some Laws, and the Establishting of others in the Civil State, by the same Authority. Tho' we have reason to fear the mad Folly of the giddy Multitude, yet we have no reason to be afraid of the prudent and wise Resolves of our Rulers. As I am fully perswaded, that it is altogether unlawful for any private Person, without the Concurrence of Authority, to innovate any thing in the State; so also I am satisfied, that it is unlawful for any private Christian to introduce any Novelties in the Church, or lay aside any Rites and Ceremonies authorized by Law, without a due Warrant and Authority for it. But yet a just and lawful Authority may abolish those things which have no other Foundation for their Institution, but that which is human. And tho' History gives some deplorable Instances of the sad Effects of Popular Innovations, promoted by Factions, and carried on without any due Warrant and Authority for it; yet it also furnishes us with some Instances of the happy and successful Issue of a Reformation, carried on by the lawful Authority of the Kingdom. It was by this that the Reformation among our selves was carried on so far, and with such Success, in the Days of *Henry VIII*, and of his Son King *Edward*: It was by the Authority of the Kingdom, that it was in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth* brought to the Perfection it is now arrived at. It is wonderful to consider the wise and prudent Steps taken by those excellent Persons, who were so long engaged in that happy Work, to bring it to that Maturity it was brought to at the End of King *Edward's* Reign. And if either that King had lived longer, or that pious Martyr Archbishop

Cranmer

Cranmer had survived the Fury of Queen *Mary's* Reign, to have had an Influence upon the succeeding Sovereign Queen *Elizabeth's* Councils, we have reason to believe that it had been brought to such a pitch, that those little things which now divide us had not continued the Bones of Contention among us.

2. It is necessary, that the Alterations to be made should only relate to the Ceremonial part of our Worship, without infringing the least upon the Authority of our Faith. This is maintained in its Purity by the Church of *England*, and is set forth in that incomparable Body of Articles compiled and published by the Authority of that admirable Princess Queen *Elizabeth*. From this Faith I would earnestly press and exhort all Men not to depart one hair's breadth.

3. To prevent all the Inconveniencies which may attend such an Alteration, it is farther necessary, that it should not only be done by Authority, but that the things to be altered should be resolved and agreed on, before that any Law be established to authorize the Alteration of any thing; lest the present Land-marks should be removed, before that we are agreed where to fix them for the future. This would be of dangerous consequence, in that it would unhinge the present Settlement, without establishing a new one. This indeed would leave the Discipline of the Church in a very great Uncertainty, and produce very great Disorders and Confusions in her Administration. It was therefore the wise Contrivance of the first Reformers (that they might with Success accomplish the glorious Work they were engaged in) first to agree upon an After-settlement, before they unhinged the present. They did not attempt to alter the Faith or Practice of the Church, in those things which

which were at present received and practised by it, by declaring any thing in the one or the other unlawful, before they were agreed upon what was necessary to be believed or done for the future. It is certainly dangerous, to remove a Land-mark from the Place it stands in at present, before we are agreed where it should, and are resolved where it shall stand for the future.

4. To prevent perpetual Alterations, to which Men are very prone when once a fickle Temper and Disposition seizes on them, and which it is very necessary in time to check ; it is necessary that the Time wherein these Alterations shall be made, should be limited by the Magistrate ; for else the Church will always be in danger of new Mutations, by which her Discipline will labour under very great Disorders. The Sum of this Reply therefore is, That there can be no possible Danger arising from the Alteration of a few Things, for the sake of an Union among Protestants, if it be regularly done by Authority, and limited to the Ritual Part of our Worship ; if we be agreed upon what to alter, before we begin to alter, and the time of doing it be duly limited by Authority.

Object. 4. It may perhaps be objected against this Union, That the leaving those Ceremonies indifferent as to their Use, which are excepted against, will destroy the Uniformity of our Worship ; and that this will not therefore produce the desired Effects, but on the contrary will breed great Animosities and Contentions among the Members of the Church. And it may be urged by some, that it is reasonable to think, that every one will defend and maintain his own Practice, and on the contrary, be condemning the Practice of those who differ from him;

him. That this will raise Disputes, which will be attended with Heats and Passions, to the great prejudice and detriment of the Churches Peace, for the maintaining whereof, it is necessary that we should all comply with the Injunction of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 10. 10. *Speak the same things.*

Reply. There are three Things laid down in this Objection, which it is fit we should consider. That it is necessary, for the Peace of the Church, that there should not only be an Unity of Faith professed by her Members, but that also there should be an Uniformity in her Worship practised by them. That the laying aside the necessity of using the particular Ceremonies excepted against, will destroy this Uniformity of Worship. And, That this will necessarily be attended with great Heats and Animosities amongst us.

1. It is urged, That an Uniformity of Worship is necessary for the maintaining the Churches Peace and Order. I grant indeed, that an Uniformity in the Worship of GOD is very desirable, if it might be to the general Content of reasonable Men; and that in order thereunto it is necessary that there should be a publick Form of Worship; to which, if there be in it nothing that is unlawful, we ought to submit; but yet I think the nature of such a Thing requires that it should be drawn up in such inoffensive Terms, and with such an entire Freedom from all manner of Ceremonies which are not absolutely necessary for the Decency of the Worship, that no Person whatever should have any just Occasion to except against it. I am satisfied, that an Uniformity wherein nothing sinful is enjoined, is not only desirable, but in some sort necessary for the Well-being of the Church: Yet I think it has been a very great Mistake

which some high Ceremonialists have made, to strain this Matter of Uniformity of Worship so far, as to exclude every one from their Communion, who cannot comply with every little Punctilio, or indifferent Ceremony. It would have conduced much more to the Peace and Tranquility of the Church, if all those Things which are not necessary for the Decency of the Worship, and are accounted by the Church to be in themselves but indifferent, had either been wholly laid aside, or left in their Use as they are pretended to be in their Nature: If this Method had been taken, I doubt not but it would have turned much to the Churches Advantage. And I think now it would tend very much to Peace, if those Things which are indifferent in the Eyes of one Party, and sinful in the Eyes of the other, were left to every Man's Liberty to use or not to use; as also, that those Things which are look'd upon as necessary by the Church-men, and as indifferent by the Dissenters, should be by these complied with. If Men would but once come to this Temper, the Difformity of Practice in the several Parishes in those little Matters, which are complained of by the Dissenters, would be unperceptible. It is the stretching an Uniformity too far, which has made such a Breach of Affection, and Difformity of Practice among us. But yet I would not stretch this Forbearance in Things indifferent so far, as to lay aside any of those Ceremonies, which are the necessary Ingredients in the Decency of our Worship, or expressive of our Reverence of the Divine Majesty: For, as Decency and Reverence are necessary in our Addresses to an earthly King, so I think those Civil Rites, which in common express our Reverence and Respect to those, ought to be maintained and kept up, and

and practised in our Addresses to the King of Heaven.

2. Another Thing mentioned in this Objection is, That the laying aside the necessity of using these particular Ceremonies, which are excepted against, would destroy the Uniformity of our Worship. In Answer to this, I shall only observe, That if those which are excepted against by the Dissenters were altogether abolished, as they may lawfully be, seeing they are owned by the Churchmen themselves to be but indifferent in their nature, and therefore not necessary ; then there would be no fear that this Liberty, which is proposed to be left to every Man to act in these lesser Matters as he pleases, would hurt or destroy the Uniformity of our Worship. But yet tho' they should not be abolished, but that those Things should be left indifferent to every Man, to use them or use them not, at his Pleasure ; I cannot see how this can hurt the Uniformity of our Worship. Uniformity doth not consist in the entire Conformity of every individual Person or Parochial Church, to every little Rite and indifferent Ceremony used by some of the Members of the National Church in the Worship of God : If this were Uniformity, then all the Rites and Ceremonies, with all the several Modes of Worship used and practised in Cathedrals, ought to be used in every Country Parish. Now I think, no Body did ever stretch the Necessity of an Uniformity in Worship so far. Every Man knows, that there is a great Difference between the Cathedral and Parochial Worship ; but yet I think very few will censure this Difference, as any Breach of the Uniformity in Worship required by the Law. Tho' every little Rite and Ceremony in our Worship should not be practised by every Person in the Churches Communion, yet there

would be such an Uniformity as might satisfy every reasonable Man, if the same Prayers, and the same Offices, were submitted unto, and used by all in her Communion, or who do officiate as Ministers in this Church.

3. It is farther urged in this Objection against an Union, That the leaving the Ceremonies in Dispute as indifferent in their Use as they are in their Nature, will necessarily produce Heats and Animosities among the Members of the Church, and therefore will not produce the desired Effects. To this I answer, I cannot see the Reason why the different Practices of some Churches in some lesser Matters, should be attended with Heats and Animosities, more than the present Difformity which there is between the Cathedral and Parochial Worship. Yet seeing some Men cannot curb their own Passions, it is necessary that a Way should be thought on to prevent this Inconveniency, which it is possible may be the Consequent of leaving the Things in Dispute indifferent in their Use. To prevent therefore all Heats and Animosities, which may proceed from the differing Practices of the Parochial Churches in these lesser Matters, I think this a very proper Expedient, *viz.* That all Persons whatsoever should be prohibited and forbid, under the severest Penalties, either by Word or Writing, directly or indirectly, to justify the Use, or condemn the Disuse of any of those Things which shall be left by Law indifferent in their Use. I think there can be nothing more reasonable than an Injunction of this nature; for it is unreasonable, that those who are left to their own liberty, should be suffered to concern themselves with what another doth.

Object. 5. It may perhaps be urged against this Union, That the parting with the Ceremonies

in

in Dispute, would endanger the Corruption of the Faith, in that it will necessarily call in question an Article thereof, which doth assert the Churches Authority to ordain and decree Rites and Ceremonies: And that therefore it is necessary for the Church to maintain her Ceremonies, as a Barrier to, and Hedge about her Faith.

Reply. In this Objection there are two Things material, and fit to be considered: The Plea, that the parting with the Ceremonies in Dispute will endanger the Corruption of the Faith; as also, that it cannot be done without calling an Article thereof in question.

1. It is objected, That the parting with the Ceremonies in Dispute will endanger the Corruption of the Faith. If I could be indeed convinced of this, I should not any more plead for an Indifferency as to the Use of the Things in Dispute: I would not by any means endanger the Corruption of the Faith, the preserving of which in its Purity is indeed the Glory of the *English Church*: But I can see no Reason why some Alterations in the Ritual Part of our Worship should endanger the Common Faith. There is a vast difference between an Alteration or an Abolition of a few Rites, which have no other Foundation but an Human Institution, and the altering and corrupting that Faith in any one Article thereof which is established by the Authority of the Scriptures. The Ritual Worship, as it is established by Human Authority, may also be lawfully repealed by the same Authority: But as the received Faith of the Church is established by a Divine Authority, so no Authority less than that can alter or repeal any one Article of it. I will only add this; That it doth not follow, that because a lawful Authority may see Cause to alter or abolish some of these

those Rites and Ceremonies which were at first instituted and appointed by no more than an Human Authority, that therefore the Faith, which is established by a Divine Authority, must necessarily be in danger either of a total Subversion, or at least of a very great Corruption.

2. It is urged in this Objection, That the Church cannot part with the Ceremonies in question, without calling in question an Article of her Faith, which asserts her Authority to decree Rites and Ceremonies. Some Answer to this was made in my Reply to the first Objection: There tho' the Churches Authority to ordain mix'd Rites, which were necessarily conjoined with the matter of Worship, was denied; yet her Authority to ordain naked and simple Rites, was owned and acknowledged. This Power, I think, no reasonable Man will deny to the Church: For if this Power be not granted to her, she hath no Power or Authority at all. I cannot therefore believe, that in the general and indeterminate Sense of the Words of that Article, any would refuse to subscribe the first Clause of the twentieth Article of the Church of *England*: And therefore I have sometimes wonder'd, what was the Reason, why in the Act of Toleration the Dissenters are excused from subscribing. I verily believe, that all sober and moderate Dissenters would generally subscribe it, and that the true Reason why they do except against some Ceremonies used in the Worship of our Church, is not because they question the Churches Power in general to ordain Rites and Ceremonies, but because they are perswaded in their own Consciences that the Ceremonies in Dispute are not such as the Church has Authority to ordain. If the Dissenters therefore were obliged to subscribe
those

those Articles, and among the rest that in particular ; I cannot see, tho' (to satisfy their Consciences in this matter) the Church should part with these Rites excepted against by their Brethren, how this can endanger either this, or any other Article of Faith.

Obj. 6. It may perhaps be urged against this Union, That the parting with the Things in Dispute would be an Encouragement to Superstition. That to assert Things to be unlawful, which are indifferent, because enjoined by our Superiors, is as gross Superstition, as it is to make such indifferent Things necessary Parts of Religion and Worship. That therefore tho' parting with a few indifferent Ceremonies is of no great consequence ; yet to part with the Doctrine of the Lawfulness of indifferent Things is of very great weight and moment.

Reply. The parting with the Things in Dispute would not be any Encouragement to Superstition, neither would this be to part with the Doctrine of indifferent Things being lawful when enjoined ; this Doctrine might be retained notwithstanding this. What Encouragement can this be to Superstition, unless they were parted with upon the account of their being judged by the Dissenters unlawful in their Use, because of their Injunction ? If this indeed were the Ground of the Dissenters Refusal to submit to the Things in Dispute, and upon this account they desired their Abolition, there might be some Reason both for the Objection, and also for a Refusal to part with them. Whatever particular Conceits some Men may have who may be averse to the Use of any thing, tho' lawful in it self, only because it is enjoined, which indeed is in effect to be disobedient to Authority, only because

because our Rulers command our Obedience ; yet this is not the Case of all the Dissenters, they are not all, nor yet I hope the greatest part, of this mind : They do not scruple Conformity to the Ceremonies in Dispute, because they esteem them unlawful only because of their Injunction, tho' otherwise very lawful to be used ; but because they cannot think them altogether in their Nature so agreeable to the Divine Command. And tho' all those Things which are desired to be left indifferent in their Use, according to the Conviction of every Man's own Conscience, were so ; yet it would not be any Encouragement to the superstitious Conceits of those who place their Religion in refusing to comply with indifferent Things, only because they are enjoined ; for the Reason of the Churches parting with them, is not because they are indifferent, but because they are adjudged by the Dissenters to be sinful, tho' upon what Grounds they adjudge them so, is best known to themselves. I shall only add, That tho' the Church, to satisfy the tender Consciences of their Brethren, should part with the controverted Ceremonies ; that yet the Doctrine of the Lawfulness of the Use of indifferent Things when enjoined, would not be parted with ; for still there would be many Things in her Worship and Discipline enjoined her Members, indifferent in their own nature, which would remain as Instances of the Churches Power in that respect. And tho' all that can by modest and reasonable Men be demanded, should be granted ; yet not one, whose Mind is intoxicated with that wild Conceit, could conform themselves to the Churches Government ; so that no Danger can arise from this Union on this account.

Object.

Object. 7. Some perhaps may object against this Union, That it will be in vain to attempt an Union, unless the Church of *England* will be persuaded to lay aside her Episcopal Government, which has (as these suppose) no Foundation or Warrant in Scripture, but is only a Remain of the Popish Hierarchy, which ought to be abolished in all Churches which pretend to be Reformed; and that until this be done, they cannot think of an Union with the Church of *England*.

Reply. I doubt not, but that there are some such Zealots among the Dissenters, who are so prejudiced against a Diocesan Episcopacy, and so fond of their own Opinions as to Church Government, that they cannot believe any thing to have any Warrant from Scripture, which they have not a Fancy for. As an Union with these Bigots is not to be expected, so neither is it desirable: For tho' I could wish, that the Church of *England* would part with what is indifferent, to satisfy tender Consciences; yet I can never desire that she should sacrifice her Government to the Demands of unreasonable Men. For every unprejudiced Person will be satisfied, that what is offered against an Union in this Objection, is very unreasonable, if the Truth of these two things are made appear, *viz.* 1. That tho' it is in the Word of God required, that there should be Order and Government in the Church, yet that God has no where injoin'd any particular Form of Government, to be practiced and submitted unto by every Church: As also that the present Government of the Church of *England*, as to the Essentials of her Hierarchy, doth agree with the Government of the Primitive Church.

2. Tho' it is required in the Word of God, That there should be Order and Government in

his Church; yet He has no where therein in-join'd his Church to submit universally to any one special Form of Government, exclusive of all others. It is absolutely necessary to prevent Confusions and Disorders in the Church, that there should be some Order and Government maintained and practiced in his Church, who is the God of Order, and not of Confusion; and therefore He has commanded, that all things therein should be done decently and in order: For the better fulfilling of which Apostolical Canon, He has laid down General Directions, how both the Officers and Members of the Church are to be qualified, as also how they ought to behave themselves. But as to the particular kind of Government to be exercised in the Church, he seems to be in his Word altogether silent, leaving it to the several Churches, to practice that particular kind of Government, which may be found to be most agreeable to the particular and special Circumstances of the several Churches. Therefore seeing that this is one of those things, which, tho' it is in general commanded that it should be, is yet, as to the special kind thereof, left to the particular Determination and Choice of every Church: As also that a Diocesan Episcopacy has not only been of a long standing among us, but even from the first Plantation of Christianity in *England*: As also, that it has, and is still found to be the most agreeable and convenient Government for the *English* Church; it is unreasonable to require or expect, that she should change or alter it.

2. The present Government of the *English* Church doth, as to the Essentials of her Hierarchy, agree with the Practice of the Primitive Church. Tho' there are some things in the Ecclesiastical Discipline and Government, which many of her Members would rejoyce to see a Regula-

tion of; yet as to the Essentials of that Hierarchy, it must be acknowledged, by any that is at all acquainted with Ecclesiastical History, that there is a very great Agreement between the Ancient Discipline in the Apostolick Ages of the Church, and the Modern Government of the Church of *England*. To manifest this Conformity between the Government of the Catholick Church in the Apostolick Ages of the World, and the Modern Government of the Church of *England*, more convincingly, I shall look into the Government then exercised in the Church, and compare the present Government of the *English* Church therewith. Besides the many subaltern Offices in the Primitive Church, which (the Use of them being perverted by the *Romish* Church from the first Design of their Institution) are now abolished by the Reformed, there were three Principal Offices in the Church at that Time, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. To these, Men qualified for them, were by Fasting, and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, in a very solemn Manner ordained. The Deacons (to mention the Duties of their Function in the first place) were an inferiour Order of Ministers in the Primitive Church, who were ordained to Preaching the Gospel, and had a Power also to Baptize, beyond which their Authority did not extend in Ecclesiastical Matters: for as to the Sacrament of the Supper, they were allowed to do no more than assist the Bishop or Presbyter in the Celebration thereof, by delivering the Elements to the People. The next Order to these, were the Presbyters; These were ordained to the Celebration of all the several Services of the Ministry, and who therefore had a Right, not only with the Deacons to Preach and Baptize, but also to Administer the Sacrament of the Supper in

the Bishop's Absence: There were several of either of these Orders in most Churches. The highest Office in the Church was the Bishop, who presided over all the rest. Whether this Office in the Church was of a Divine Institution, or whether he were no more than a Presbyter, chosen to that Precedency over his Fellow-Presbyters, by the Consent and Suffrage of the Presbyters of that Church, over which he presided, as it is a Doubt which cannot be easily resolv'd; so this is certain, that he had the Precedency and chief Rule in that Church where he was Bishop. Now if we compare the Government of the Church of *England* at present, with the ancient Government of the Catholick Church in the first Ages of Christianity, we shall see a very great Agreement between them. In the Church of *England* there are Deacons appointed to the very same Work, which the Deacons of Old were imployed in; our Deacons are allowed to perform no other Ministerial Function, but preaching and baptizing, and delivering the Elements at the Lord's Supper. In the Church of *England* there are also Presbyters, authorized to discharge all the Duties of the Pastoral Office, as those of the Ancient Church were. And over both these Bishops presides, as the chief Rulers in their respective Sees. There is also this Agreement between the Primitive Church formerly, and the Church of *England* now, That as all those several Offices were then executed, not by Laymen, but by certain Persons solemnly ordained thereunto; so in the *English* Church now all those who execute the Office of a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, must be in Orders. This is such an Agreement in Government with the Primitive Church, as is not to be found

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in any other Form of Church-Government whatsoever. In the Presbyterian Model of Government, there is but one of these three Offices, *viz.* Bishops or Presbyters, which you will call them. And tho' in the Independent Model there are three distinct Ecclesiastical Offices; yet two of them, contrary to the Practice of all Antiquity, are born and executed by Laymen. I shall only add one thing more, That as then all the Power of Legislature to which the Church pretends, was lodged in their Synods, who had the Authority of making Canons and Constitutions, for the better management of the several Churches, as also of determining all Doubts and Controversies in Matters of Faith; so now all the Power, to which the Church pretends of that Nature, is lodged in this Church in her National and Provincial Convocations. The great Difference therefore between the Discipline of the Ancient Church, and the Modern Government of the *English* Church, seems to lie here: In the Primitive Church the Presbyters had no settled Cure, but were sent by the Bishop to preach and exercise their Ministry, where there was the greatest hopes of propagating the Gospel; whereas now since the general Conversion of the Nation, and the Endowment of Parochial Churches by the pious Munificence of Lay-Patrons, the Presbyters in the Church have fix'd and certain Cures. This is so far from being any Corruption, that it is a very great Advantage, both to the Church, and her Officers, to have them so very well provided for in their respective Cures; and that their Condition of Life is now abundantly more fixed, than when obliged to go from place to place, as the Bishop saw Occasion.

caſion. In the Ancient Church alſo, the Right of Electing to any Eccleſiaſtical Office, ſeems to have been veſted in the People, by whoſe Suffrage thoſe who were advanced in the Church were choſen ; whereas now the right of preſenting to Eccleſiaſtical Cures is lodg'd in the Hands of the Lay-patrons. It is difficult indeed to give any certain Account how this Right came to be transferred from the People to the Patron, tho' I look upon this as a probable Account thereof. When the Churches were, upon the General Conversion of the Kingdom, founded and endowed by the pious Munificence of the ſeveral Lords of Mannors, who erected and endowed Parochial Churches for the uſe of themſelves and Tenants in their reſpective Royalties, they did (as eſteeming it equal that thoſe, at whoſe charge the Miniſter was maintained, ſhould chuſe him) reſerve the Right of Electing and Preſenting a Miniſter, to ſerve in their own Church, to themſelves and their Heirs. As this ſeems to have been the Original of the Patron's right of Preſentation, ſo that it is thus, is many times of advantage to the Church : For if the Vulgar were now to elect their own Miniſters, ſuch is the Corruption of Mens Minds, and Manners, that we have juſt ground to fear they would not always make the beſt choice for themſelves. But yet I could heartily wiſh that there were a Means found out to preſerve the Patron's Right, and ſo far to reſtore the Primitive Practice, that Miniſters might not be thruſt upon Pariſhes againſt their own Conſent. There ſeems alſo to ſome to be another difference between the Ancient and Modern Diſcipline of the Church, which is this ; The Extent of the Biſhop's Jurisdiction ſeems then

then not to have been near so large as now. About this there have been various Opinions; and after all that has been said by the one side, or the other, it remains doubtful, whether at first the Limits of their Jurisdiction were confined within the compass of one single Congregation, or no. There are many Expressions in Antiquity, that would induce us to believe that it was; tho' the Numbers of Subaltern Officers, in some Churches especially, do render it very probable, that their Jurisdiction did extend to more Societies of Christians, than one. In this uncertainty, it is possible that the Bishop's Jurisdiction anciently was not, on the one hand, so narrow as some would make it; nor yet, on the other hand, so wide as others. And it seems now to be some disadvantage to the *English* Church, that some of the Sees are so very large, that it is very difficult for any one Man to discharge his Episcopal Charge as he ought to do. It were therefore to be wish'd, That the Extent of every Diocess were reduced to such a Proportion, that at least every County in *England* might have its own Bishop. But yet, tho' this is a very great disadvantage to the Church, and renders the Episcopal Office too great a Burden for one Man's Shoulders; it is but an accidental Difformity at most, which there is in this respect between the Ancient and Modern Government of the Church. And this Difformity will appear yet less, if we consider, that the Extent of the Episcopal Jurisdiction as to place, is no where limited in Scripture; as also how uncertain we are, what was the Extent of the Ancient Dioceses. There are indeed some other Corruptions crept into the Government of the *English* Church, which are necessary to be amended; but yet there is nothing in that Hierarchy,

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which can cause any Man, that considers the Government of the Primitive Church, and how near ours doth agree thereunto, to wish for, or desire its Abolishment and Extirpation. For that it is the Government of the Church of *Rome*, is no Argument at all for its being laid aside by us; for tho' we ought to reject all the Corruptions of that Church, yet for the sake of These we ought not to reject those things which are agreeable to Scripture and Antiquity, tho' they are practised by those of that Communion. To conclude therefore, as I can see no Reason why any should desire the Extirpation of Diocesan Episcopacy in *England*; so I think it unreasonable to demand the Alteration of that Government, which has been so long practised in the *English* Church.

Object. 8. It may perhaps be objected by some against an Union, That it will be in vain to make any Proposals for an Union, unless, as a Preliminary thereunto, the Church of *England* will promise not to require the Use of her Liturgy; for as much as they look upon it unlawful to impose any Form of Prayer to be used universally, by those who do officiate as Ministers in the Church; That they believe that the Imposition of these, and the tying up every Minister to a prescrib'd Form of Words, from which they must not vary, is a Violation of Christian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Use and Improvement of those Gifts and Talents, which God has given Ministers for the Edification of the Church.

Reply. The Substance of what is alledg'd against an Union in this Objection, is this; That tho' it be lawful to use a prescrib'd Form of Prayer, yet it is unlawful to impose one, for that such an Imposition is a Violation of our Christian Liberty, and a Hindrance of the Improvement of our Ministerial

nisterial Talents. The manifesting two Things, will answer the Objection fully, *viz.* That the requiring the Use of a Publick Form of Worship, is no Violation at all of Christian Liberty, or Hindrance of the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. As also, That tho' there are some things in the Publick Prayers of the Church, the Amendment whereof many sober and pious Men wish for; yet as to the Substance thereof it is excellently fitted and adapted for publick Use.

1. The requiring the Use of a publick Form of Worship is no Violation of Christian Liberty, or Hindrance to the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. That the Use of set Forms is lawful, is acknowledged by most; tho' if it were denied, the Publick Liturgies of several of the Ancient Churches, which no doubt were designed for the Use of them, do evidence that they were used very early in several of the *Eastern Churches*. We have the Remains of several of them, tho' much corrupted by the Church of *Rome* to this Day. Neither is it any Argument against the Antiquity of those Liturgies, or their being used by the Churches whose Name they bear, that they are so grossly interpolated by the Church of *Rome*: This is indeed an Argument of their being corrupted, but not that they are wholly spurious. The great thing therefore objected as to these publick Forms, is not against the lawfulness of their Use, but of their Imposition; for it is urged by these Men, that the Church has no Authority to impose any set Forms, to be universally used by her Ministers; That this is a Violation of Christian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents. I confess, if the Liturgy were so far imposed, as that we were forbid to pray at all in any other Words, we might then indeed

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object against the Imposition thereof as a Violation of Christian Liberty, and a Hindrance to the Improvement of our Ministerial Talents: But seeing we are not forbid to pray for the Supply of the Wants either of our selves, or of that particular Place where we are called to Minister in Holy Things, in Words and Expressions adapted and suited to our, or their present Circumstances, I cannot see where the Strength and Consequence of the Objection lies. Tho' we are enjoined to offer up the publick Requests of the Church in Words enjoined and required by her Governours; if their be nothing sinful in the Forms prescribed, I know not where the unlawfulness of their Prescription lies; neither can I see how it can be any Bar to Christian Liberty, tho' they are imposed by the Church. I shall only add one thing more, That as Prayer is an asking of God the Mercies we stand in need of; so it is but reasonable, that those publick Mercies which we all stand in need of, every where and at all times, should be petitioned for by all in the same Words.

2. Tho' there are some things in the Liturgy, for the Amendment of which many pious and sober Men wish; yet as to the Substance thereof it is excellently fitted for the publick Use of the Church. And tho' some things therein may be liable to Exception, yet it must be acknowledged by unprejudic'd Persons, that it equals, if not excels, every Thing of this Nature in the World; neither do I think, whatever particular Defects it may have, that any publick Form of Prayer in any Church whatever, excels the publick Prayers of the Church of *England*, for its Pithiness, Comprehensiveness, and Copiousness of Expression. How full and affectionate are its Petitions! How comprehensive, but copious is the Sense,
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and how natural and smooth are the Expressions thereof! In this excellent Liturgy, the Supply of all the publick Necessities of the Church in general, and of her Members in particular, are in very copious, but comprehensive Terms pray'd for. And [that which adds a yet greater value unto it,] these things are asked in Words, not only expressive of the Things prayed for, but adapted also to excite, raise and engage the Affections of the humble Suppliant. In a word, there is one continued Vain of humble Devotions, and pious Affections, that runs thro' the whole thereof. Thus much I have presumed to affirm concerning its Excellency and Usefulness, tho' to give a just and true account thereof, must be the Work of an abler Pen than mine.

Object. 9. It may perhaps be objected by some against this Union, That tho' the Church should grant all that some very Moderate Dissenters may require, that then the Constitution of the Church will not please every Body, but will be still liable to Exceptions; and that therefore it is better that things should continue as they are, seeing that this Compliance of the Church will not heal the Breach, but only divide the Dissenters, and weaken their Interest by drawing over some of their Members to the Communion of the Church.

Reply. There are three things in this Objection, which I shall consider, *namely*, That if those things which are excepted against, should be abolish'd, or left indifferent, that yet the Churches Constitution would not please every Body, but would still be liable to Exceptions; *as also*, that this Compliance of the Church would not heal the Breach, but only weaken the Interest of the Dissenters, by drawing some of their Members over to the Communion of the Church of *England*.

1. It is urged as a Plea against this Union, That if the Church were brought to such a Temper, as to abolish, or at least to leave the Rites excepted against as indifferent in their Use, as they are in their Nature, that yet this would not please and satisfy every Man, but some would still be discontented. In answer to this, I grant, That it is impossible, by the utmost Endeavours of pious and peaceable Men, to please all Men. The Design therefore of pressing this Matter upon the Church, is not with any hopes of pleasing all Men: For I am satisfied, that there are many Men, who are resolved not to be satisfied; whose Separation from the Church, as it is not grounded upon any Pretence of Reason, so they will never be satisfied, or by any Reasons prevailed with to return to an Union and Communion with her. Some of the Dissenters are possessed with such a Spirit of Contradiction, that it is impossible to satisfy them by the utmost Endeavours of reasonable Men. It is not the Satisfaction of these Men, who are resolved to be troublesome, that I am labouring to procure, neither do I endeavour after an Union with these, for this were to strive at Impossibilities. My great Design therefore in thus earnestly perswading the Church to seek an Union with her Dissenting Brethren, at the Expence of indifferent Rites, which are not absolutely necessary for the Decency of the Worship, is (if possible) to bring things to such a temper, that the reasonable and modest Dissenters may have Satisfaction, and that the rest may be left inexcusable: For this must and will be the Consequence of the Church's Clemency. The Reasonable Men among the Dissenters will return to the Communion of the Church, and the Separation of the rest will then appear, when that their Pretences of separating are taken away,
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more evidently to be the Effect, not of a tender Conscience, but perverse Obstinacy. By this Instance of Clemency and Condescension to her weak Brethren, the Reputation of the Church will be advanced, and the Credit of her obstinate and rebellious Sons will be greatly lessened.

2. It is farther objected, That tho' those things which are excepted against were left indifferent, the Church would still be liable to Exceptions. I grant it; for it is impossible that in this imperfect State the Constitution of the Church should ever be reduced to such a State of sinless Perfection, as to be wholly without spot or blemish. Tho' if this were not only possible, but actually so, yet then the Church would not be safe from the Cavils and Exceptions of unreasonable Men: For, if the innocent Life of our dear Redeemer was not free from the Reproaches of his Enemies, tho' his Life were a Pattern of Perfect and Celestial Holiness; much less can we think or expect, that the Church, tho' her Constitution were never so pure, and free from Sin, should be exempted from being liable to the Exceptions of such as these. It is the peculiar Immunity and Happiness of the Church triumphant in Heaven, to be both sinless and undeserving Reproach her self, and also to be safe from all the Exceptions here made against her. Unless, therefore, we could either hope that it were possible for the Church Militant here on Earth to be capable of a Community of Privileges with the Church triumphant in Heaven, by being, as that is, exempted and freed from all manner of Sin, and every Blemish; or that the same Spirit of Love and Charity which possesses and reigns in the Breast of every glorious Angel and holy Soul in Heaven, would subdue and captivate the Spirit of every turbulent and unquiet Person on Earth; it is not to be hoped

ped that the Church will be secure from the Slanders and Exceptions of those whose Delight it is to find fault with, and speak evil of things they know not. That a Church is liable to Exceptions, is not a justifiable Cause of Separation from her, unless that we our selves have any just Matter of Exception against her. Farther, No Exceptions against a Church are justifiable, unless the Things excepted against can be proved by us to be, from the express Warrant of the Scriptures, unlawful: This nothing can ever be proved to be, if it be not against that Word of Truth which is the compleat Rule of Faith and Obedience. For if a Church's being liable to Exception be any justifiable Warrant to withdraw our selves from her Communion then we must have Communion with no Church on Earth: For, What Church is there which is not liable to Exceptions? This should satisfie every reasonable Man, that if he is convinced in his own Mind that there is nothing sinful, which he is obliged to do as a Member of that Church, with whom he is in Communion; no pretence of some things being expedient or unnecessary therein, can justify his Separation from it. For, as an Excellent Divine well observes, Not things Expedient or Inexpedient, but Lawful or Unlawful, ought to be the Measure of our Obedience.

2. It is urged, That this Condescension of the Church, in leaving the Things which are excepted against indifferent, will not heal the Breach, but, only lessen it, by drawing off many of the Dissenters from that Interest. I confess, that I do not believe or expect, that this Condescension on the Church's part will altogether heal the Breach: For I am perswaded that there is a Generation of Men in the World, whose Interest it is to embroil the Church, and heighten our Differences.

of are others who are possessed with a Spirit of Opposition, whose delight therefore it is to fish in troubled Waters. There are others, whose Prejudices are so great, that they cannot be easily (at least presently) surmounted. All these are, and will be, averse to any Union. Therefore tho' I cannot hope, that by this means the Breach will be quite healed; yet I am perswaded, if the Church would but come to any Temper as to these Matters in Dispute, that the Wound, which is now very great, would be very much lessened. By this means, tho' not all, yet very many of the Dissenters, and [which is most desirable] the most learned and considerable Persons of that Party, would be brought over to the Interest of the Church. By the Accession of these to her Interest, the Church would not only receive a very great addition to her Strength; but the Dissenting Interest, which is now very strong, would in all probability be thereby terribly shatter'd. And That Interest grows so strong, and the Numbers of those who withdraw their Communion from Her are so many, that I think it highly concerns the Church to consider of some Methods to weaken the one, and lessen the other.

Object. 10. It may farther be objected, That an Union between the Church-men and the reasonable Dissenters would be so far from being an Advantage to, or the Interest of the Nation, that it would be very dangerous, if not destructive, to the Civil Government of it. (This some may say) would remove the present Ballance on which the Security of the State doth depend; And that, as it is the Honour of His Majesty to hold the Ballance of *Europe*, by maintaining an *Equilibrium* among the several States thereof; so also the same Policy requires, that at home the Ballance between the Church and State. should be kept so
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top'd that the Civil Government be not overtop'd by the Ecclesiastical Power ; and that this would be the certain Consequence of such an Union. Who would (may these Men say) have desired that *Spain* should ever have fallen under the Dominion, and into the Interest of *France*, for the sake of the specious Name of Unity? In like manner, if the Church were rendred strong by the Re-union of the Dissenters thereunto, it would again overtop the State, and we should be, as in the Times of Popery, again Priest-ridden, and enslaved to the imperious Humours of the Clergy.

Reply. The Strength of the Objection lies here, That an Union between the Church-men and the modest Dissenters, will be a Detriment to the Civil Government, in that it will remove the present Ballance between the Church and State, the Removal whereof will be prejudicial to the latter ; and that therefore, to prevent any Inconveniency which may accrue to the State by a Removal of the present Ballance, it is necessary to keep up the present Divisions in the Church ; lest being united within her self, the present Ballance should be lost ; and the Church, grown potent by the Re-union of the Dissenters to her, should overtop the Civil State, to the great Damage of the Kingdom. These are the Maxims upon which (it is feared) some designing Politicians, who are more concerned, if not for their own Interest, yet at least for the Welfare of the State, than of the Church, do go: They think that the Ecclesiastical and Civil State are so contrary and opposite, that they cannot subsist together ; and that therefore the State cannot prosper, unless the Church be oppressed and divided. To cut the Sinews off, and give a full Answer to this Objection, it is necessary to Evidence both the Impiety and Folly of this pretended Policy.

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1. This is an impious and sinful Policy. Such indeed is the Wickedness and Impiety thereof, that every good Man ought to abhor and detest it. Those certainly who oppose an Union among Protestants upon this Account, whatever Profession of Religion they may make, do not herein act either as Christians or Protestants. The Maxim, upon which all their Policy is built, is the highest and most impious Reflection which Men can possibly cast upon the Saviour of the World and his Apostles, who are the Authors of all that Power the Church is entrusted with. The Maxim, upon which the whole Scheme of their Policy is laid, is this, That the Ecclesiastical and Civil Power are contrary to each other, and that therefore the Encrease of the one must necessarily be the Diminution of the other. This Maxim is both false in it self, and a profane Reflection upon Christ and his Apostles. To assert this, is to profess that they believe, Christ and his Apostles came, in the literal Sense of the Words, to send a Sword upon the Earth, to disturb the Peace of the World, and destroy its Order, by setting up a Power in the Church destructive to Civil Government: This is such a Reflection upon Christ the Author of our Holy Religion, and so contrary to his Design who has made Obedience to Magistrates one great Branch and Duty of Religion, that a good Man cannot but reject it with Indignation.

2. Those who are influenced by such Political Considerations as these, to hinder and oppose an Union between the Church-men and the Dissenters, are guilty of as much Folly as Impiety: As therefore good Men will reject their Policy for its Impiety, so a wise Man will explode it for its Folly. The Folly of this pretended Policy is demonstrable in these two Particulars:

1. A Comprehension will not remove the present

sent Ballance between the Church and State, as is pretended, and therefore can be no Detriment to the Civil Power. Methinks, I would charitably hope that there are none, especially among our Rulers, who are acted by Politicks, which cannot be urged without Impiety, or practised without Folly; but yet, if this be really an Objection with any against a Comprehension, it must have received its Original and Rise from the ill Use the Church-men (as History informs us) made of their Power, when it was fully in their Hands, by their constant Enchroachments upon the Rights of the Civil State. It is confess'd, the Mis-improvements of the Ecclesiastical Power, and the imperious Carriage of the Clergy, even to Crowned Heads, in the Times of Popery, when the Clergy with an uncontrouled Sway domineered over the Consciences of Men, may justly make us afraid of falling any more under their Dominion and Tyranny: But yet, tho' we have just Cause to be afraid of the Tyranny of the Popish Clergy, we have no Reason to fear a Comprehension; for it is a great Mistake in any to apprehend, that this will remove the present Ballance, which only can be pretended as a Reason of the Danger which these apprehend may accrue to the State from this Union. If indeed by this Union the Church's Power and Authority would be enlarged, or her Wealth increased, there might be some Ground for these Fears, and consequently some Reason for this Objection. But if by a Comprehension, tho' the Terms of Communion would be somewhat enlarged, and her Members thereby become (we hope) more numerous, there would yet be no Encrease of her Power and Authority, as distinct from the Civil State; the Ballance would still continue as it is betwixt the Church and State, and no Danger would arise upon that Account to the State from

a Comprehension. I cannot therefore but observe, that the Instance alledged in the Objection will not answer the End for which it is brought : For *France*, and the other States of *Europe*, have contrary Interests, and are opposite each to other ; and therefore the Enlargement of the Power of *France* must be a Lessening to that of the neighbouring States: But the Church and State are not thus contrary each to other; but their Interests are interwoven, so that the Prosperity of the one is the Advantage of the other. Add to this, That by the Addition of *Spain* to *France*, there would not only be an Enlargement of her Dominions, but also an Encrease of her Power ; which being already so great as to make her formidable to the neighbouring States, it is their Interest to prevent this Union : But this cannot be pleaded by any against a Comprehension ; for neither is the Church's Power at present formidable to the State, nor yet would it by the Re-union of the Dissenters to her be made so, in that by this Union her Authority would not be at all increased. To conclude this Argument, As it is the Honour of His Majesty, by holding the Scale of *Europe* in his Hand, to maintain and preserve the present Peace inviolable ; so it will be the immortal Honour of His Majesty, and those worthy Patriots of their Country whose Province it is to engage in this great and weighty Enterprize, to restore in some measure the Peace of our *English Israel*, which has been a great while torn and rent by intestine Divisions about Matters of very little moment. The Accomplishment of this great Work will for ever redound to the Honour of those who shall be the happy Instruments of effecting it ; and the Advantages accruing, not only to the present, but to succeeding Ages also from it, will be so great, that the Generations to come will rise up and call them *Blessed*.

2. An Union between the Church-men and Dissenters, would greatly strengthen the Civil State. So far would a Comprehension be from being dangerous or destructive to the Government of the Nation, that it would on the contrary be a very great Advantage to it: For nothing can strengthen the Civil State like an Union in the Church. By this means those Factions which divide the State, and arise from the Differences in Religion, would be extinguished, and the Power of Religion would get ground in the Hearts of Men; than which nothing can tend more to the Safety of the Civil Government. Nothing can be a stronger Tie upon Men to obey the Civil Power, than the Obligation of Conscience; nothing can influence the Consciences of Men like the powerful Influences of that Religion which teaches Men for Conscience-sake to be subject to the Higher Powers, as Ministers of God to them for good. Whatever therefore advances the Life and Power of the true Religion in a Kingdom, doth very much advance the Security of the Civil State. For if there be nothing else but the Ties of Interest or Fear, without any inward Principle of Religion, to keep Men within the Bounds of their Duty to the Civil Powers, the Government will stand upon a very uncertain Foundation; and will be continually in danger of being overturned, when either the Interests of Men change, or the Grounds of Fear, whereby Men of factious Spirits are contained within the Bounds of their Duty, by the encrease of their Power are taken away. Hence is it, that he who converses with Books will find, that the Declension of the Power of Religion in a Kingdom, has usually been a sad Presage of the Destruction of the Civil State. To wind up this Argument, If nothing can be so great a Security and Support

to the Civil State, as the Power of Religion, and nothing can advance the Life and Power of Religion so much as an Union among the Professors of it ; then an Union between the Church-men and the Reasonable and Modest Dissenters, would be so far from being dangerous to, that on the contrary, it would be the Security of the Civil State. I shall add no more, but only observe, That as it is the Interest of the Kingdom, that Religion and Unity should be promoted ; so those Politicians who oppose and are afraid of an Union among us, as dangerous to the Government, are very much mistaken.

Thus have I impartially given the Reasons why an Union betwixt the Church of *England* and the Reasonable Dissenters, is very desirable, and ought to be endeavoured after by all who have any regard either to the Welfare of Religion or their Country. I have also impartially, and without Prejudice, considered what is, or may (with any colour of Reason) be objected against it. I proceed now to propose some Methods, which (with Submission to better Judgments) I believe would very much contribute to the effecting and accomplishing of this good and great Work ; and which (if they were but put in execution) would (I believe) very much advance the Honour and Interest of the *English* Church. I shall only add this, That as the Danger of the Protestant Religion, from the restless Endeavours of the Papists from without, and her intestine Divisions from within, which are of so much Advantage to the Papists, put me at first upon this Work ; so the following Proposals were (without any regard to the particular and private Interest of any Party of Protestants) calculated by the Author of them, to promote and advance the Honour of Religion, the Interest of the Church, and the

the Welfare and Advantage of the Kingdom.

Proposal 1. *That no Minister, who has one Living with Cure of Souls worth 60 l. per Ann. real Value, or that Sum coming in yearly by or from any Estate Ecclesiastical or Temporal, together with a Living with Cure of Souls of any Value whatever, shall be capable of taking another Benefice with Cure of Souls, without a Resignation of his first Living or Benefice. And to prevent Fraud in this matter, it is farther proposed, That all Faculties be nulled and void. It is farther proposed, That if any Person, having a Living with Cure of Souls under the Value aforesaid, shall afterward be preferred to another Living with Cure of Souls above that Value, he be obliged to resign the former Living. It is farther proposed, That where any Person shall have two Livings, they shall lie so near, that he may personally supply them both. As also, That no Incumbent, or Minister in any Market Town, shall be capable of any other Living, without a Resignation of that.*

This Article is levelled against all Pluralities, where the Smallness of the Maintenance doth not make it absolutely necessary. Pluralities have with great Reason been, in all Churches whatever, reckoned a very great Corruption; and therefore ought to be abolished, as much as possible, in a Church that pretends to be Reformed. There have been many Canons of Councils, and some Laws made by Parliaments, against this Corruption: But notwithstanding these, there are still shameful Instances of the Avarice of many Clergy-men in this respect. Pluralities are a general Detriment to Religion; for when Men see their Ministers heaping up of Preferments, they are tempted to believe that there is no such thing as Religion in the World, and that the Ministry is only a secular Trade and Employment whereby Learned Men get Riches and Estates for themselves and their Children; and not a Sacred Function,

tion, instituted and appointed for the Good and Advantage of the People. Some Parishes indeed are so ill provided of a Maintenance for their Ministers, that, without the Addition of another Cure, they cannot subsist: It were indeed to be wished that this Evil were removed, and that the small Livings were either by Law, or by the pious Munificence of well-disposed Persons, augmented to such a Proportion, that every Parish might be able to maintain its own Minister; but until this be done, it is necessary that in some cases Pluralities should be allowed. But however, seeing the very End and Design of endowing Parochial Churches was the more constant and regular Supply of the several Parishes; it is reasonable that those Parishes which have a competent Maintenance for a Minister, should have their own Incumbents to officiate duly and constantly among them. But yet, tho' by this Article I would restrain Pluralities with Cure of Souls, yet I would not put a Bar to any deserving Person's receiving Advantage from those Dignities which the Church has to dispose of for the Encouragement of Learning and Piety, and to which there is no Cure of Souls annexed; these may be enjoyed by any who have the Cure of Souls already committed unto them, in that they do not interfere with their present Charge.

Prop. 2. That every Minister do reside upon his Benefice, except such as have two Livings; in which case it shall be sufficient that the Minister do reside upon one of them.

Non-Residence is another Corruption in the Church, which is the necessary Effect and Consequence of Pluralities: For if a Minister have more than one Living, he must necessarily be for allowing Non-Residence; because it is impossible that he who has two Livings should reside upon

upon both. The rooting out therefore one of these Evils, will be a great step to the rooting out the other. It is a horrible Shame, that some of the best Livings in *England* for Maintenance, are neglected by their Ministers, who hardly ever come at them, except it be to receive their Rents; as tho' there were no Provision for a Minister upon the Place. This is not only a gross Neglect of their Duty, who are obliged by their Functions to take Care of the Souls of those over whom they are set by the Providence of God in Spiritual Things, but it is a Detriment to the Poor; for Ministers ought to set a good Example to their Flocks, and to use Hospitality and Charity to the Poor. But how can either of these be done by those Ministers, who hardly ever come at their Cure? It is an Observation, that (as the late Bishop of *Worcester* tells us) is made by the Canonist, *That there is no Command for Residence in Scripture, because the Nature of the Duty requires it.* Did Men but consider the End of their Ministry, and the Nature of that Holy Office which they bear, they would not be so careful of the Fleece, and so negligent of the Flock, as they generally are. No wonder that there is so little serious Religion among us, when by many Pastours there is so very little Care taken to instruct or teach their People better by their own Examples.

Prop. 3. *That for the better Sanctification of the Lord's Day, and Instruction of the People, every Minister shall preach twice within his Parish every Lord's Day; or else spend as much time as will be equivalent thereunto, in instructing his Parishioners by, either Exposition of the Scriptures, or Catechizing of Youth, except, by reason of the Deficiency of the Maintenance, he be possessed of two Benefices, lying so near together, that he supply them both; in which case it shall be sufficient to preach once every Lord's Day in either Parish;*
provided

*provided that this Injunction do not oblige, where Sick-
ness, or any other extraordinary Accident doth prevent
it.*

Much depends upon the putting this Article in Execution: For by this means Ministers will be more ingaging in their Theologick Studies, to the increasing of that very necessary part of Learning among the Clergy. The Lord's Day, a great part of which in many Country-places, is now grossly profaned, will be better sanctified by the People; who also by this means will be better instructed in their Duty to God and the King. Frequent Preaching also will have a Tendency to keep Men to the practice of their Duty, by keeping up the Spirit of Piety among them. Lastly, the Ministry by this means will grow into Repute; for the Honour of that profession depends upon frequent and serious Preaching.

Prop. 4. That no more be required to take a Living than a solemn Declaration of our belief of the Truth of the Articles of the Church of England; as also, an open Declaration that we will conform our selves to the Usage and Customs of the Church of England, as it shall be then by Law Established.

There are three things designed by this Proposal. The preserving the Faith of the Church from Corruption, The keeping up the uniform Order of the Church, and the satisfying Men of tender Consciences. As it is necessary that the Faith of the Church should be preserved free from every Corruption, so I believe the solemn Declaration of our belief of the things mentioned in the former part of this Article, will effectually secure it from all Attempts of Deceivers to deprave it; and yet leave Men to a due Liberty of Thought as to some speculative Matters, in which several learned and pious Men may be of different Opinions.

nions. Such a solemn Declaration of our belief of the Truth of the Articles of the Church of *England*, will also prevent the Prevarications, and detect the Hypocrisie of those Persons, who now subscribe them indeed, but not as Articles of Faith, but Articles of Peace. I confess, those who can thus prevaricate, have found out a way to evade the Force of any Law that can be made; and to keep their Livings let what Changes will come, even tho' Popery it self should (which God prevent) get the ascendancy among us: For according to the Sentiments of these Gentlemen, we may subscribe to any thing whatever, how contrary to Truth soever it may be. It is necessary that the Hypocrisie of these Persons should be detected, which can be by no other way, than by being required to profess their belief of the things they subscribe to: This will quite overturn that Distinction made use of by Men, who are resolved to do any thing but part with their Livings. The latter part of this Article is designed to preserve the Order of the Church, and yet give Ease to the tender Consciences of some Men; who, tho' they may think the use of the things required by the Book of *Common-Prayer* lawful, yet cannot declare their Assent and Consent to every thing contained in, and prescribed by that Book. The things to which we are required, by the Act of Uniformity, to give our Assent and Consent, may be considered, either as matters of Faith, or as matters of Practice. If we consider them as matters of Faith, a solemn Declaration of our Assent and Consent to all and every Thing contained in, and prescribed by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, is a Declaration that we do believe, that all the Things and Expressions, even every Proposition and Word, in that Book, are true, and agreeable to the Word of God; and that

that we do believe that there is nothing contain'd in that Book, either as to the Matter exprest, or the manner of Expression, false, or disagreeable to the Form of sound Words. This, some think, is such an Acknowledgment, as seems to equal the Authority of that Book, with the Authority of the *Bible*; and which therefore any Man which has a due regard to the Authority of those Divine Writings, would be very loath to make of any Book, but the *Bible*. Neither can any Man, I think, safely give his Assent and Consent to all and every thing contained in the Book of *Common-Prayer* in this Sence, who is not intirely satisfied of the Truth of every Thing, even of every Expression contain'd in that Book. If we consider the Things to which we are required by the Act of Uniformity to give our Assent and Consent, as Matters of Practice only; then the Declaration of our Assent and Consent to all and every thing contain'd in, and prescrib'd by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, is no more than a solemn Obligation of our selves to comply with, and conform to the Customs of the Church, by using the things required to be used by her Members in that Book. This, and no more, seems to be the Design of the Assent and Consent to all and every thing contained in, and prescribed by the Book of *Common-Prayer*, required by the Act of Uniformity: For that the Declaration there mentioned, had a respect to the things contain'd in the Book of *Common-Prayer*, as matters of Practice, and not as matters of Faith, will evidently appear to every one, that considers the Distinction between Articles of Faith, and Matters of Practice, made use of throughout that Law; as also, that the Declaration there mentioned, is by that Law applied, not to the belief of every Word

and Proposition, but to the Use of the things prescribed, in the publick Service of the Church. To this the Declaration it self is limited in that Act, as appears by the Paragraph immediately going before the Declaration it self, the words whereof are these: *And to the end, that Uniformity in the Publick Worship of God (which is so much desired) may be speedily effected, Be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That every Parson, Vicar, or other Minister whatsoever, who now hath and enjoyeth any Ecclesiastical Benefice or Promotion within this Realm of England, or Places aforesaid, shall in the Church, Chappel, or place of Publick Worship belonging to the said Benefice or Promotion, upon some Lord's-Day before the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, which shall be in the Year of our Lord God one thousand six hundred and sixty two, openly, publickly and solemnly read the Morning and Evening Prayer, appointed to be read by and according to the said Book of Common-Prayer, at the times thereby appointed; and after such reading thereof, shall openly and publickly, before the Congregation there assembled, declare his unfeigned Assent and Consent to the use of all things in the said Book contained and prescribed in these words, and no other: And then follows the Declaration it self. And afterwards the Law making mention of Lecturers, and requiring them also to make the same Declaration, doth evidently distinguish between our Assent unto, and Approbation of the Book of Common-Prayer, as it is in general a publick Form of Worship, and our particular Consent to use all things contain'd thereby. It is evident therefore, that tho' words were made use of in that Declaration, which many did believe to import the Truth of every individual Word and Rite contained in that Book, and who therefore for that Reason could not make*

make it in those words, which were by the Law enjoyned ; yet the Design of the Law was no more, but to enforce the Practice of the things contain'd in that Book. And if the words of the Declaration themselves, in their own Significancy, had been as much limited to the use of the Prayers and Rights of the Liturgy, as the Law did limit the Declaration, there had not so many left the Communion of the Church on that account, as did. There were then, and are still, many who would comply with the use of many things, which they cannot Assent to as a matter of Faith : For a Man may promise to use whatever he believes to be lawful, whereas he cannot Assent to any thing as an Article of Faith, but what he is satisfied in his own Mind is contained either directly or by consequence in the Scriptures, which are the compleat Rule of Faith. I could wish therefore, that instead of the Declaration required to be made by that Act, that this or the like were required.

I A. B. do promise and ingage in the presence of God and this Congregation, that I will comply with the Use of those things contained in, and prescribed by, the Book of Common-Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, &c.

By this Declaration the Design and Intent of the Act of Uniformity would be fully answered, and the Consciences of Men would not be ensnared. This would preserve and secure the Uniformity of the Worship of the Church, and yet would let into her Communion those, who would willingly comply with the Use of many things, which they cannot give their Assent unto as matters of Faith ; who therefore do now refuse to make that Declaration, because they do believe the words thereof do import more than an Obligation

gation to use the things required by the Book of Common-Prayer, and consequently more than they were intended for by the Act of Uniformity.

Prop. 5. *That a certain Number of Divines, who shall be impowred to call in such of the Dissenters, to advise with, as they shall think fit, be authorized by Commission to review the Book of Common-Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments; and to make such Alterations therein, as may clear the Sense, where doubtful, and give Satisfaction to tender Consciences.*

It must be confest, that frequent and unnecessary Alterations in the publick Forms of Worship, are neither desirable nor expedient, and tends very much to make Mens Minds unsettled and wavering; but yet it doth not follow, that all Alterations are unreasonable or unlawful. In some Cases it is unreasonable to deny them, for sometimes there is a Necessity for them. Words frequently change their Signification, and Men their Customs; many things that have long lain in Obscurity, are at last discovered. And as it is in this Respect with other Things, so also is it with many lesser Truths: We, who stand upon as it were the Shoulders of our Forefathers, do see farther than they could. These Things frequently render it necessary to alter many things in the publick Offices of the Church, as often as either Words change their Signification, or Men their Customs; as often, as by the Increase of Knowledge, those Truths, which have hitherto lain hid in Obscurity, by Men of Learning and Piety are better and more clearly understood. As therefore (they are the Words of a great Man, but a little Transposed) all Men ought on the one Hand to avoid the Imputation of a Desultory Levity, as tho' they loved Changes for change sake; so on the other Hand we must avoid a sullen adhering to things, because they were once settled, as if Points of Honour
were

were to be maintained here; and that it look'd like a reproaching Constitution, or the Wisdom of a former Age, to alter what they did: Since it is certain, that what was wisely ordered at one Time, may be as wisely changed in another. There have been several Alterations made already in the publick Service of the Church since the Reformation, and why therefore may it not be lawful to alter a few things now? Is there nothing in it fit to be considered? Are there no Expressions in it doubtful, the Sence whereof it is fit should be cleared up? Many things might be offered out of the Liturgy as worthy of Consideration, because they are now made the Subject of Debate; but we would not presume to dictate to our Superiours, and therefore refer our selves to them to consider and determine what is fit to be altered in it.

Prop. 6. That the Cross in Baptism be left indifferent as to its Use, so that it shall be left at every Minister's Liberty to use it, or not, according as he shall judge it lawful, or not, in his own Mind.

There are many, who look upon the Sign of the Cross no more than an honourable Badge of their Profession; whereby Persons baptized are put in remembrance of Christ dying upon the Cross, and of their own Duty in taking up Christ's Cross by following and obeying him, which Duty they think may be indifferently expressed either by Words or Actions: These think it not Essential to the Ordinance of Baptism, much less do they look upon it as any Sacramental Sign, or as any Similitude or Image forbidden by the Second Commandment: If they did believe, that it did in the least contradict the Divine Precept, they would upon no Account use it: They at most look upon it no more than a Rite and Ceremony convenient to be retained in that part of Divine Worship, wherein Persons are dedicated to the Service of a
Cruci-

Crucified Christ, to put them in mind, that they ought not to be ashamed of his Cross to whose Service they are devoted. There are others, who have quite different Apprehensions of the Cross; These look upon it as a Ceremony, that has been very much abused by the Church of *Rome*, whose professed Doctrine it is to worship all Crosses, by which they are direct Idolaters; and that therefore, tho' the abuse of a thing be no Argument for its disuse, if the thing be useful and necessary in its own nature; it is very convenient, to prevent the like abuse of it by us, wholly to lay it aside, especially the Minds of Men being so inclin'd as they are Superstition. They further look upon it as an Addition to Baptism, and that therefore it looks very like a Sacramental Action; for which reason they judge the use of it not justifiable. And that which makes them the more averse to the use of it, is this, They think that it interferes with the Obligation of the Second Commandment; They judge it to be, tho' not a fixed, yet a transient Image; for that it is a Representation of the Cross of Christ, which is of the very Essence of an Image. These think that the Use, or even the making, not only Graven Images, but the likenesses of any thing in Heaven or Earth, and the introducing it into any Part of the Divine Worship, is contrary to the Obligations of that Precept; and that therefore the Sign of the Cross being at least the Representation of Christ Crucified, the Use of it in any part of Religious Worship, to speak the most favourable they can of it, doth not appear to them to be lawful. To all this, on the other hand, the Church-men make this further Reply, That tho' the Papists Idolatrously worship Material Crosses, yet never the Sign of the Cross; and as to their superstitious Uses of this Sign, which

which were many, they are not only declared against, but carefully rooted out of the Minds of Men. They further say, That nothing proper to a Sacrament is ascribed thereunto; for it is not pretended to be any Sign from God to Man, or that any Promise of Grace is annexed thereunto; neither is it pretended to be a means of receiving Grace from God, nor is there any Efficacy ascribed thereunto; much less is it by them supposed to be any Seal or Pledge from God, to assure the Soul of Grace received. They are also assured it can be no Image, because they are assured it is no proper Act of Worship at all, it being a Sign from Man to Man, and not from Man to God (as yet many other lawful Ceremonies are, such as Kneeling, Bowing, Lifting up the Hands and Eyes) in which the Minister doth declare to the Congregation, what is hereafter expected from the Baptized Person; and that therefore it is not so much an Image, as Letters and Written Words; much less is it as much an Image, as was the Altar erected by the Ten Tribes and a half, to witness their part in the God of *Israel*. I do not pretend to determine who of these are in the right. It is confess'd, the Use of it is very Ancient, we have Evidences that it was used by many of the Primitive Fathers, the Memorial of whose Piety is now very grateful to pious Christians; but it must be acknowledged also, that even those holy Men used some mixtures of Superstition with it. It must be also considered, that it has been grossly abused by the Papists, and a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence to many serious Christians ever since the Reformation, and still continues to be so. Many, who have freer Thoughts of it than others, may lawfully use it; but those, it is certain, cannot, whose Thoughts

are straitned and bound up about it: For if I believe a thing to be unlawful, and yet use it, I sin against my own Conscience, in doing that I am perswaded in my own Mind is contrary to the Law of God. To prevent therefore all Disputes about it, it is proposed, that it be left free to every Man to use, or disuse it. And to prevent any Imposition on any side, If the Parent desire the Use of it, and the Minister refuse it; or if the Parent scruple the Use of it, and the Minister thinks it convenient to do it; That in case of such Disagreement between a Minister and his Parishioner about this matter, the Parent shall apply himself to any neighbouring Minister to perform that Ordinance for his Child. By this means every Man will be left to a freedom of Thought within himself, and may acquiesce in his own Practice.

Prop. 7. That it be left to the Liberty of the Parent, whether he will provide any Sureties at his Child's Baptism, or no; provided, nevertheless, that where there are no Sureties, the Parent, or next immediate Relation of the Child, be present to give an Account of his Faith, and to be informed of his Duty in relation to the Child at the Time of its Baptism.

The Use of Godfathers is indeed very ancient: And if we look upon them as Collateral Securities, which, together with the Parent, the Church requires for the bringing up of the Child in the Christian Faith, the Institution doth abundantly bespeak the Church's Care for the Souls of her Members. I cannot therefore see where the Fault of this Institution lies, but that in Times when, and Places especially where the Spirit of Persecution reigns, it is very useful; tho', blessed be God, by Reason of the Peace of our Israel, and the universal Profession of Christianity among

mong us, they are not so absolutely necessary at this Day. Whereas therefore, by reason of the Religious Differences which have for a long time reigned among us, many Persons, otherwise serious and pious, have received invincible Prejudices against them; to which it must be acknowledged the gross Abuse of the Institution, by the Neglect of those who have undertaken that Office, without ever regarding the Performance of the Duties of it, has very much contributed; it is therefore proposed, That for the sake of Peace, the Weakness of our Brethren in this respect should be passed by, and that they should not be required to provide any Sureties, if they themselves will engage to the Church, that their Children shall be trained up in the Christian Faith. It is also to be wished, that to prevent Prejudices for the future, against them, That all Ministers were required by their respective Ordinaries, to admit of none for God-fathers or Godmothers, but such as are qualified, according to what is required in the Twenty Ninth Canon.

Prop. 8. That no Ministers be obliged to refuse the Lord's Supper to any, of whose Fitness (both in respect of the Knowledge and Practice of Religion) for that Ordinance they are satisfied, only because they scruple to receive it kneeling.

It is confessed, the Church of England, by the cautionary Rubrick added at the End of the Communion, have given such a fair Account of this Posture, and have so fully vindicated themselves from any suspicions of favouring the Romish Idolatry, that no Man has any just and reasonable Ground to refuse to receive it in that Posture. But yet seeing some very pious Persons are prejudiced against it, as favouring the Superstition

of the Papists; and that it is evident from Antiquity that Kneeling at the Supper was not then in use; as also that the sitting Posture, it is possible, if all Things are considered, may agree very well with the nature of the Institution, it is but reasonable our weak Brethren should be born with in this matter; and that Ministers may be left to such a freedom, that they may not be obliged to refuse any that Ordinance, barely upon the account of the Posture used in receiving it. And now I am speaking of this Head, I wish it might be considered, whether the Reason made use of by Bishop Ridley in his Visitation *An. Dom. 1550.* for the Lord's Board being made every where within his Diocese after the fashion of a Table, and not of an Altar, may not be as cogent now as it was then; and whether or no some uniform Order throughout the Kingdom, as to this matter, may not hinder and prevent many Differences, which are now apt to arise upon this account between Ministers and their Parishioners, whereby the Success of the Gospel is very much hindered and obstructed.

Prop. 9. *That the Surplice be either taken away, or at least the Use of it left indifferent.*

Tho' Charity shou'd oblige all Men to believe, that the first Design of enjoining that Garment to be worn by those who are in Orders, at the time of their officiating, was innocent; and that no more was intended thereby, but to put Ministers in mind of that purity of Heart with which they ought at all times to draw nigh unto God, but more especially in his own House; yet because it is a Garment, the singularity of which gives great Offence to many serious and pious Christians, who do not only think it decent, but necessary, that those who are separated from the
World

World to the Service of God, should be distinguished from others by a grave Habit, agreeable to their Function; it were to be wished, that the Use of it were either abolished, or left indifferent. These think it lawful for the Magistrate to enjoin what Habit he sees convenient for their constant Wear; but yet they cannot think it necessary, lawful, or convenient, for any to appoint any special and distinct Habit to be worn by Ministers at the time of their officiating in Holy Things only, and not at other times also. Neither can they see any Reason, why that, or any other Garment, should be appropriated to one part of the Service, and not another: They think that this looks like making of holy Garments, and as tho' the Garments did recommend the Worship unto God; which they cannot but look upon as an Error, injurious to the Honour of Almighty God, as tho' He regarded the Vestments in which he was worshipped, more than the Worship it self; and pernicious to the Souls of Men, as tending to encourage them to trust more to the Priest's Garments for Acceptance, than to the Intercession of Christ, or the Preparation of their own Hearts. It is not my Business to engage in this Quarrel, by determining whether they are in the right or no: For supposing they are in the wrong, which perchance they may be; yet seeing the Matter is of so small moment in the Church's Account, and so offensive to many serious Christians, it is unreasonable to make it a matter of Contention any longer. To prevent which, it is proposed, that the Use thereof be either wholly laid aside, or at least left indifferent in all Parish Churches.

Prop. 10. *Whereas it is a Dispute, Whether an Ordination to the Office and Work of the Ministry by Presbyters*

byters only, without the Concurrence of the Bishop, be not valid; and, on the other hand, certain, that it is not Regular, according to the present Discipline of the Church of England: To avoid all Coniention therefore about this matter, and that the Church of England may evidence her Zeal for Union, and the Veneration she has for the Reformed Churches abroad, whose Ministers are ordained by Presbyters only, and yet maintain her own Authority and Order in the Administration of her own Discipline, this Medium is proposed; That whereas, in the Ordination of Priests in the Church of England; Those to be ordained are not only by Prayer and Imposition of the Bishops and Priests Hands solemnly consecrated unto, and invested with the Order of Priesthood, in those Words, Receive the Holy Ghost, &c. but are also by the delivery of a Bible unto them particularly authoriz'd to execute that Office in that particular Congregation, to which they are lawfully appointed, in those Words, Take thou Authority to preach the Word, &c. By which latter Action and Words the Person ordained is not invested with the Office of a Presbyter, which was done by the former Rite and Words, but is only authorized legally to do the Work of his Office in that Parish, where the Providence of God doth place him: It is proposed, That all such Persons, who have been ordained by Fasting and Prayer, with the Imposition of the Hands of Presbyters only, and who have Testimonials of such their Ordination, as also of their pious and peaceable Lives and Conversations, shall not be obliged in the former manner, and by the former words, to submit to a Re-ordination to the Office and Work of the Ministry in general; but shall be, by the laying on of the Hands of the Bishop only, in the latter manner and words, only authorized to exercise their Ministry in that Place and Church to which they are called; and that by virtue of this their legal Admission to the Work of the Ministry in this manner, they shall
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be as fully enabled to accept of and possess any Ecclesiastical Benefice and Promotion in the Church, either with, or without the Cure of Souls, as tho' they had been ordained in the usual way and manner. It is also further propos'd, that (whereas Ordination by the Bishop and his Presbyters, is the Regular way of Admission to the Office of the Ministry in the Church of England) to preserve her Order and Discipline intire and inviolable, tho' this Indulgence be (for the promoting an Union among Protestants) granted to those already ordained by Presbyters only; yet it shall extend no further, that so her Order may be preserved for the future; and Disorder, and the Contempt of her Authority may be prevented.

This Proposal, as it is of the greatest Length, so also is it of the greatest Import and Concern. The Matter of Ordination being the greatest Difficulty to be surmounted in effecting an Union betwixt all reasonable and peaceable Protestants: This is that which those of both Sides are most zealous about. The Church-men plead, That the Ordination of the Dissenters is done in a Schism, and without any lawful Authority, in opposition to the established Order of the National Church; and that it is done without the Consent and Concurrence of the Bishop, who in the *English* Church has the chief Jurisdiction in Ecclesiastical Affairs, without whose Concurrence therefore Ordination, which is an Act of Jurisdiction, cannot be done: That therefore the Ordination received from the Hands of the Dissenters, as null in it self, and contrary to the established Order and Government of the Church of *England*, ought to be reiterated and renewed. The Dissenters, on the other hand, plead, That supposing they were ordained in a Schism, that yet their Ordination is valid and good, being done by the
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Presbytery, or those who execute the Office of Presbyters, in that way which is required by the Scriptures, *viz.* by Fasting, Prayer, and Imposition of Hands. That therefore there is the same Reason for the Re-baptizing of those who are not Baptized by those of the Church of *England*, which yet they do not allow of, as there is for Re-ordaining those who are not Ordained by the Church-men. They argue farther, That many of the Reformed Churches abroad ordain their Ministers by the same Church-Officers, as the Dissenters do in *England*; and that therefore if our Ordination here in *England* be null, theirs also must be null; and by consequence they can have no Ordinances, and are no Churches, as having no Ministers, who are an integral Part of the visible Church. That therefore tho' (if the Consequence of the Action reached no farther than themselves) they might for Peace-sake submit to be Re-ordained; yet they can never be induced to do that, which is in effect to Un-church so great a part of the Reformation, and which must of necessity put a Weapon into the Hands of the Papists against them; for which Reasons, tho' they would do what lies in them for the promoting the Peace and Welfare of our *English Israel*, they cannot submit to be Re-ordained. These are the Arguings of either Side. And after all that can be said, it must be confessed to be a nice Point, and that on either Side there are Difficulties not to be surmounted, but by Men of an extensive Charity. It must be confessed, That there is great Strength in the Arguments on either Side. The Arguments of the Dissenters are such, that it will be a difficult matter for any to condemn their Ministry as a Nullity, without condemning the Ministry of many parts of the Reformation beyond the Seas as a Nullity

Nullity also. There is, on the other hand, so much Force and Strength in the Arguments made use of by the Church-men, as do manifest and shew, that if the Ministry of the Dissenters is not a Nullity in it self, that yet their Admission to it was irregular, as contrary to the Order and Discipline of the Church of *England*. The only way therefore, if this Difference be ever composed, of doing it, will be by pitching upon such a *Medium*, whereby a due Veneration for the Ministry of the Reformed Churches abroad may be manifested, and a strict Regard may be had to the Honour and Order of the *English* Church; whereby the Objections of either Party may be answered; and the Scruples of reasonable Men satisfied. This (with the greatest Submission to those who shall think otherwise) I believe the *Medium* offer'd in this Proposal would do: For by this *Medium* there is abundant Care taken, on the one Hand, to satisfy the Dissenters; and, on the other Hand, to maintain the Authority and Order of the Church of *England*; and on both Hands, to manifest the respect we in *England* have for all the Reformed Churches abroad, whether their Ministers are ordained by Bishops or Presbyters. There is such a Mixture of Submission to the Church on the Dissenters part, and of Clemency and Condescension on the Churches part; that I can see no reason, why any on either side should stand out any longer upon this account. By this *Medium*, Care is taken to preserve the Authority and Order of the Church inviolable, and free from Contempt; and yet room left for a perfect and compleat Freedom of Thought as to every Man's private Sentiments of this Matter. I shall only add this further, That if any shall think that a

Schism doth nullify Orders, and that therefore the Orders of the Dissenters must necessarily be a Nullity, and their Ministers, for that Reason no more than Lay Persons ; To these I shall propose the Charity of the *Romish* Church (whose Charity we all know is not very great) for an Example ; She has always, in her cool Thoughts, judged otherwise than these Gentlemen do : For it is the Judgment of that Church, That Schism is no Bar to the Validity of any Person's Orders ; and therefore in the Days of *Queen Mary*, they did not Re-ordain those, who had been ordained before in the Days of her Father and Brother, tho' those Days were esteemed by that Church a Time of Schism ; but did only supply what was wanting in their Ordination, by the Addition of those *Romish* Rites, which were omitted by the Reformers. And to this Day they do not ordain those again, who are ordained in the *Greek* Communion, tho' they judge them to be as much Schismaticks as the Protestants are. And therefore I would hope, that the Church of *England* has as much Charity for the *English* Dissenters, as the *Romish* Church has for those who dissent from her. But if these should think, that the Reason why the Papists did not reject Ordination, tho' done in a Schism, was because they looked upon it as a Sacrament ; they would do well to consider, that we have abundantly more Ancient Testimonies of the Churches Practice in this respect. A learned Divine of the *English* Church (who tho' not of the first Rank, yet is numbred among her Dignitaries) assures us, that the Ancient Church made a great difference between those ordained by Hereticks, and those ordained by Schismaticks only. Of which he gives us this memorable Instance, That *Melitus* an *Egyptian* Bishop

Bishop having Schismatically ordained several Persons, the Synod then convened at Nice determined, that in regard *Melitus* was no Heretick, only a Schismatick, the Orders of those ordained by him should not be declared Null ; but that being confirmed by *Alexander* their proper Metropolitan, they should be admitted to Communion, and the Exercise of their several Ministries. This was long before that Conceit, of Orders being a Sacrament, was thought on.

Prop. II. *That the Power of the Keys be so intirely put into the Hands of the Clergy, that no Layman be permitted to exercise any Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, by Censures, Suspensions, or Excommunications ; but that in all those Instances, wherein the Church is permitted to exercise her Power by the Laws, it be performed and executed by Spiritual Persons. It is further proposed, that there be none suffered to commute by buying off the Penalty, in such Cases and Crimes where Publick Penance ought to be done ; because such Commutations are prejudicial, and a very great Discouragement to a Reformation of Manners.*

It has, and doth still continue to be a very great Eye-sore in the Eyes of many high Churchmen, that so great a part of the Power of the Keys is lodged in the Hands of the Ecclesiastical Courts, which mostly consist of Lay-men. This they cannot but look upon as a very great Burthen : For tho' they judge, that the Civil State may determine in what Cases the Church shall exert her Power ; yet they judge that the Power she is allowed to exert, ought to be exercis'd by Spiritual Persons, to whom that Power seems to be in a special manner committed in the Gospel. They therefore wish that Excommunication, which is the most solemn Act of Discipline in the Church, might never be denounced against any,

but for very urgent Reasons, viz. For the obstinate denial of some important Article of the Christian Religion, or the wilful persisting in any notoriously scandalous Practice, after due Exhortation to the contrary. And as they wish it might never be pronounced but for very urgent Reasons, so also that it might be the last Remedy the Church makes use of ; and that when-ever it is used, that it be done in a very solemn manner, and attended with Prayer and Fasting for the Offender's reclaiming. And if these things were observed, I doubt not, but that the Spiritual Weapons of the Church, which are now despised by the Profane, to which their too common use has not a little contributed, would again grow terrible to Offenders. The latter part of this Proposal is absolutely necessary, to prevent the sensible growth of open Wickedness.

Prop. 12. *It is proposed, That in Cases of Scandal and Impiety committed by Ministers, the Bishop, with the Clergy of the Deanery, where the Offence is charged upon the accused Person to be committed, shall try and determine of all such Accusations ; and upon proof of any scandalous and impious Practices, committed by any Clergy-man contrary to the Canons, and unbecoming his Ministry, the Bishop shall have full Power to suspend ex Beneficio & Officio every such Minister ; as also to order the Profits of every such Living to be applied for the Payment of another to supply the place, until such time as the offending Minister shall in the presence of four Ministers acknowledge his fault to the Bishop, and promise amendment of Life for the future. It is also proposed, That to this purpose the Bishop shall yearly visit his Clergy in every Deanery, to inquire into, and determine all Things of this Nature. It is also further proposed, That for the Bishop's better Information, as to the Lives of the Clergy within his Diocess, the Bishop shall appoint one or more sober and grave Clergy-men in every*

every Deanery, whose Office it shall be to receive all Informations or Presentments, which shall by any within the Deanery be made against their Ministers ; and if the Matter be against any of the Canons, to bind over the Accusers to make good, and the Accused to answer the Charge alledged against him, to the Bishop at his Annual Visitation.

This whole Proposition is designed for the preventing Immorality in the Clergy, than which there is nothing more prejudicial to Religion. Examples are of more force than Precepts. And tho' a Man talk like an Angel of Light in the Pulpit ; yet if out of it he behaves himself like a Fiend of Hell, it cannot be expected that his Preaching should have any great Influence upon the Lives of his Hearers. It must be owned, that there are very many excellent Men and Ministers, who are the Ornaments of our Church ; but yet there are many also, who by Drunkenness, and other enormous Crimes, are the shame of their Function. The Impunity of these is both a Disparagement, and a Detriment to the Church. It is therefore necessary, that such care should be taken to punish the Immoralities which abound among the Clergy, that may make them watchful over their own Lives. I doubt not but the R. R. Bishops would, if they knew who they were, severely punish them ; but the Largeness of their Dioceses renders it impossible for them to have a personal knowledge of their Clergies Behaviour : And therefore it is necessary, that some Means should be afforded them, whereby they may receive some Assistance in the Government of the Churches committed to their Care in this respect. It is true, this Matter is now intrusted with the Ecclesiastical Courts ; but their Interest lies so much to connive at these things, that

that it is found by Experience to be to no purpose to complain of any thing in that Court ; for a little Money will stifle the matter, tho' it be never so hainous and wicked. It is therefore but reasonable, that for the more effectual punishment of Vice in the Clergy, some may be in all parts of the Diocess appointed by the Bishop to be his Assistants in suspecting the Manners of the Clergy ; who by their pious and exemplary Lives may set a good Example to the Neighbouring Clergy, and who by their Presence and Authority may overaw the Vitious.

Prop. 13. It is proposed, That those, who have at present Meetings, and shall comply with the Terms proposed, shall be suffered to continue in the Parishes where they are, to preach as Lecturers, at the charge of their Hearers, until such time as they may be otherwise provided for.

This is not designed to be any Prejudice to the Parochial Rights of any Incumbent, where at present there is a Meeting of Dissenters ; but only to provide for the Support of those, whose peaceable Dispositions shall incline them to Conform, until they shall be provided for by some settled Cure in the Church.

Prop. 14. It is Lastly proposed, That those, who cannot out of Conscience comply with the Terms proposed, but yet do profess the belief of the Christian Faith contained in the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, should enjoy the Benefit of the present Act of Toleration, with this Proviso, That their Preachers follow no other Employ, but their Preaching or Teaching. It is further proposed, That none be any more tolerated, who are either Papists, or deny the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England.

The Design of this Proposal, is to find out such an Expedient, that the Church may not lie under

der the Imputation of persecuting her weak Brethren, and yet may preserve her Doctrine and Discipline free from gross Corruptions. It is impossible, that all those who profess the Christian Faith, should be in all things of the same Mind; we may as soon expect, that all Men should have the same Physiognomy and Countenance, as this; and therefore, tho' it be necessary, that notorious Depravers of our Faith, and such who cause wilful and unnecessary Divisions in the Church, should be censured according to the Nature of their Crimes; yet it is also necessary, that those who are weak in the Faith, and differ from us in no substantial Point of Religion, but only in some lesser Matters should be born and dealt with according to that Tenderness, which our Redeemer himself has manifested towards the Souls of Men. The Restrictions added to these Proposals, are designed to prevent the growth of Anabaptistry and Quakerism; the one whereof, by putting up every Tradesman, who is so conceited of himself, as to believe himself able to be a Preacher, into the Pulpit, is endeavouring to supplant and undermine the very Order of the Ministry: The other, by dissembling with God and Man, is endeavouring to deprave the Faith once delivered to the Saints.

Thus have I faithfully proposed what I think is both necessary, and will very much contribute to the healing of our Breaches: And, *I pray God incline the Hearts of those, in whose Power it is to compose our Differences, to do those things which may make for Peace.*

F I N I S.

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